Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

CANADA

Country Note

OECD Directorate for Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Country Note for Canada* is the outcome of an intensive review of early childhood policies and services in Canada by an OECD review team in September/October 2003. The review was initiated by an invitation to the OECD Directorate for Education from the Department of Social Development, Canada, and centred on the provinces of Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The *Country Note* is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: the Introduction outlines the goals and framework of the OECD early childhood education and care (ECEC) reviews. A premise of the OECD approach is that the development of young children depends greatly on equitable social structures, on energetic public management and financing of the sector; and on the informed practice of qualified professionals who provide - in a caring environment - structured environments and programmes appropriate for young children.

Chapter 2: Contextual issues shaping ECEC policies in Canada, is descriptive in emphasis, and describes Canadian demographic developments, women's participation in the labour market, social and economic issues, and other factors related to the organisation of early childhood services.

Chapter 3: Current ECEC policy and provision in Canada, outlines the key features of the current system. It describes the broad structure of the services, regulatory procedures, funding, access and provision, staffing and training, research and monitoring. It examines how these indicators compare with one another across different forms of provision and among different groups. It also describes recent policy initiatives at both federal and provincial levels, with a special section devoted to the four provinces reviewed.

Chapter 4: Issues for ECEC in Canada explores the coherence of current policies from the point of view of quality, access and equity. It considers in particular the situation of Aboriginal children, and challenging organisational and financing issues.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations. This final chapter puts forward for consideration by the Canadian authorities a number of suggestions and recommendations. They are based on first-hand observation of services and on discussions with the ministries and the major stakeholders in the early childhood field in Canada. In summary, these conclusions are as follows:

A Summary of Conclusions

General remarks

From the perspective of the OECD review team, significant strengths exist in Canada:

- *Remunerated parental leave for almost a year has been enacted*. Although not yet extended to all nursing mothers and parents, the federal Employment Insurance Act of 2001 is a very important contribution to both equal opportunity for women and infant well-being and development (research underlines the importance of one-to-one attention for infants during the first year of life).[1]
- *The advance made by Quebec*, which has launched one of the most ambitious early education and care policies in North America. By itself, Quebec now accounts for about 40% of regulated child care places in Canada, and its experience will be extremely useful for Canada in developing a publicly managed, universal, early childhood system;
- *The effort made by several administrations after 1996, when the CAP (Canada Assistance Plan) ended, to maintain their early childhood services from their own revenue,* despite a withdrawal of Federal funding and a climate of suspicion of public services.
- *The growing consultation and co-operation between the Federal and Provincial governments*: The Federal government and many of the provinces have signed several multilateral agreements that have moved toward

[1]. Attachment theorists, such as Belsky (2001) advise a rather longer period – up to 2 years – for an infant to remain with the mother, but most researchers agree that children can benefit greatly from quality early childhood experiences during their second year. Sweden has adopted a remunerated parental leave of 480 days, of which 390 days are paid at 80% of the parent's qualifying income, and 90 days at a universally applicable flat rate of 60 SEK per day; and this is linked to a universal entitlement to a place in an ECEC service from 12 months of age. Only when there has been some crisis will children below the age of 12 months be seen in ECEC services n Sweden.

a clearer focus on child development and learning. Federal funding has begun to have a significant impact since 2003/04, and is stimulating a renewal of ECEC services in several provinces.

- *The existence of a well-established kindergarten early education network for children over five years:* Early education for 5-year olds is accepted as a public good and a public responsibility in all Canadian provinces. Kindergarten benefits from stable funding, trained teachers, structured programming and regular monitoring and evaluation. The network exists all over the country and is beginning to expand to four year olds, sometimes on an all-day basis.
- *The continuing strong contribution made by non-profit, community organisations to regulated early childhood provision*, their services now accounting for nearly 80% of subsidised child care provision. However, unlike in the original CAP, the new Agreements no longer restrict subsidies to non-profit bodies, a regulation that played an important role in limiting the spread of commercial, for-profit child care.
- *Canadian expertise in ECEC research, data collection and information*: Data provided by Canadian researchers are of high quality, and their research is both relevant to Canada and increasingly cited at international level, e.g. the McCain/Mustard Ontario study, the economics research of Cleveland and Krashinsky,[2] various analyses using the data from the NLSCY longitudinal study or the research clearing house provided by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit of the University of Toronto.

Despite these strengths, it is clear that national and provincial policy for the early education and care of young children in Canada is still in its initial stages. Care and education are still treated separately and coverage is low compared to other OECD countries. Over the coming years, significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a universal system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, with gender equity and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn.

Upstream Recommendations

1. *Strengthen the present Federal/Provincial/Territorial agreements and focus them on child development and learning*
2. *Encourage provincial governments to develop, with the major stakeholder groups, an early childhood strategy with priority targets, benchmarks and timelines, and with guaranteed budgets to fund appropriate governance and expansion.*
3. *Build bridges between child care and kindergarten education, with the aim of integrating ECEC both at ground level and at policy and management levels.*

During the 90s, growth in early childhood services slowed significantly in Canada, despite profound economic and social changes that affect the capacity of many parents to support early childhood development. The result is a patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services, within which a small "child care" sector is seen as a labour market support, often without a focussed child development and education role. In the same period, other OECD countries have been progressing toward publicly managed, universal services focussed on the development of young children. In these countries, services are also expected to play a significant role with respect to social cohesion, the alleviation of the effects of child poverty, improved child health and screening, better parenting, and family engagement in education.

In this context, the OECD team is encouraged by the Framework Agreements initiated by the Federal government. Through these agreements, Canada has become involved again with early development, and has renewed links with evidence-based research, which has consistently pointed to the developmental and educational advantages of providing high quality, early education and care for young children (see, for example, the McCain/Mustard study of 1999, which sifted through the evidence related to early development and brain research and concluded that government should give as much priority to the early childhood period as to obligatory schooling). A policy in favour of the development of young children should be seen as a cornerstone of Canadian family and education policy.

Several Provincial governments have also attempted to develop early childhood plans with priority targets, benchmarks and timelines, and with guaranteed budgets to fund appropriate governance and expansion. In the experience of the OECD team across many countries, framework policy agreements negotiated between experienced government officials, researchers and the major stakeholders are more likely to be evidence-based, and command public consent. Because they are based on objective data and wide consultation, they are also less likely to be subject to political change.

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2. These authors were invited by the OECD to address representatives from 17 national administrations concerning ECEC financing. Their paper can be accessed on the OECD website: ***<http://www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood>***

The continuity of sound, evidence-based policy presupposes also the presence of expertise and critical mass in the administrations. The OECD suggests that this can be accomplished without great supplementary expense by bringing together early education and care within integrated departments. The advantages are considerable:

- A more unified approach to all young children, focussed on early development and learning.
- More effective investment in the younger children (1-4 years), and significant savings brought about by better integration of services. (In an integrated system, there is no longer need for separate planning and downstream functions);
- More coherent policy and greater consistency across the sectors in regulations, funding and staffing regimes, costs and opening hours. For example, a unified approach to services would encourage a shift in kindergarten opening hours toward full-day provision – with real advantages for the young children and their parents;
- Enhanced continuity of children's early childhood experiences as variations in access and quality can be lessened, and links at the services level – across age groups and settings – are more easily created.
- Improved public supervision of services, and thus easier identification of[3] and access by parents to quality care. Monitoring and evaluation of critical elements can be more efficiently undertaken from a single department with its own pedagogical advisors.
- The eventual emergence of a specific early childhood professional profile, trained to work with both young children and families. The emergence of this new professional profile has led in other countries to higher training levels, better pay and conditions for staff – which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children;
- At Federal level, an expert secretariat responsible for young children could encourage the even development of early childhood systems across Canada, in which parents in every province can expect roughly equivalent rights and services. A Federal secretariat could support on a regular basis the work of the provinces in early education and care, build bridges between certification and training regimes across the country, develop pan-Canadian standards and encourage common data collection. A dedicated federal department could also take the lead in the field of research and public information.

Funding and Financing Recommendations

4. *Substantially increase public funding of services for young children*
5. *Ensure the creation of a transparent and accountable funding system, and for parents, a fairer sharing of ECEC funding*
6. *Devise an efficient means of funding a universal early childhood service for children 1-6 years, delivered equitably by mixed providers, governed by public agencies*

The reasons for suggesting a significant increase in public spending on services for young Canadian children are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of the *Country Note*:

- Other than Quebec, there has been no significant expansion of the system in Canada over the past decade. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 years find a place in a regulated service (see Table 6, Background Report of Canada), compared to, for example, Belgium 63%; Denmark 78%; France 69%; Portugal 40%; UK 60%...
- Long waiting lists exist in community services in several jurisdictions, including in centres catering for children with special needs;
- A general stagnation in quality across the board has been reported (although several centres that the OECD team visited were of high quality);
- Low public expenditure rates per child in child care. Public child care expenditure for children 0-12 years averaged $386 per child, and $3,200 dollars per child care place (*Background Report of Canada* , 2001 figures), compared to $6120 per child in kindergarten and almost $15,000 per student at university (OECD 2002, EAG);

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3. The literature concerning the capacity of parents to recognise good quality in child care is not optimistic (see Cleveland & Krashinski, 2003; Helburn, 1995). Beyond the psychological need to be positive about what they can provide for their child, many parents are unfamiliar with the structural, process and pedagogical indicators of good quality education and care. Again, parental goals are not always consistent with good quality practice, e.g. they will often value precocious literacy more than holistic development or co-operative skills. Furthermore, parents are often obliged to take the nearest childcare within their financial means. In the absence of a good public service, research has shown that as many as 65% of parents (in the United States) believe they have little choice among child care options (Galinsky *et al*., 1994).

- A market-determined fee structure (except Manitoba and Quebec), resulting in high parental contributions to child care costs, ranging from 34% to 82% of costs. The average across the country, excluding Quebec, is just under 50% of costs compared to a maximum 15% parental contribution in Finland or approximately 25% across Europe;
- An inefficient subsidy system with widely varying and complex eligibility criteria, accessed by only 22% of lone parents and around 5% of married mothers from low-income families (1997 figures – *Background Report of Canada,* 2003);
- Generalised under-funding in the child care sector with respect to wages, learning environments and infrastructure both physical (premises, outdoor spaces) and non-physical (the infrastructure of planning, administration, training, monitoring, evaluation, data collection…).

Even in those provinces/territories that are keen to develop their ECEC systems, child care services in particular are under-funded, and frequently, neither the quality nor the quantity of provision meets the aspirations of parents and professionals. Only a significant increase in investment, like that in Quebec, is likely to bring about desired change. An idea of how much extra funding will be needed can be had from the Quebec experience, and from the Cleveland/Krashinsky study of 1998. Clearly, costs are increased in Canada by the dispersion of settlements but as outlined in Chapter 4, economic analyses of government expenditure on early childhood education and care services broadly concur that the investment pays off handsomely in terms of better health for children, readiness for school, stronger educational results and additional income for families. Again, as discussed in OECD (2001), only the regular funding that state investment brings is able to guarantee access and quality on a fairly equitable basis for all groups. A combined Federal/Provincial investment approach to this situation will be necessary to plan incremental increases of budget for young children over the next decades.

The need for greater transparency in government accounting with regard to child care is based on the difficulties faced by independent analysts to calculate with accuracy the amounts Canadian governments are actually spending on services for young children up to 6 years. Again, although the ECD Agreement and Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care explicitly require incrementality in investments from both parties, the OECD team was informed that there is little to prevent a Province from receiving Federal funding, while at the same time cutting back on its own previous funding. The team was not in a position to verify the situation, but suggests – given the erosion of services in some provinces – that a more effective means of guaranteeing expenditure may need to be legislated.[4]

There would also seem to be room for a readjustment of education budgets in favour of this foundation stage of lifelong learning. For example, OECD figures (OECD, 2002) show:

- That Canadian public expenditure per university student is more than double that for the child in the kindergarten service, the part of the early childhood system which receives most public support;
- That apart from Quebec, participation rates for children 3-6 years do not reach a quarter of those of the main European countries, and expenditure on early childhood programmes for this age group comes to just 0.2% of GDP, that is, about half of the OECD average.
- That in terms of GDP, Canada spends 0.2% of GDP on the pre-K and kindergarten service; 3.6% on obligatory schooling and non-tertiary, post secondary education; and 2.6% of GDP on tertiary level education.

The OECD team encourages governments to bring up to OECD levels overall expenditure on ECEC and to improve access rates. In this effort, health, family, social welfare and other budgets may also contribute as a universal child service that ensures the health and well-being of young children and strong community outreach lessens expenditure in these areas.

Analyses of expenditure patterns for early childhood services show that parents in Canada contribute a high proportion of costs, perhaps double the European average. In this context, the OECD team proposes for consideration a more equitable 40:40:20 sharing of ECEC costs. In this division of funding, federal and provincial governments would gradually move toward the provision of 40% each, with a target overall contribution from parents of 20% to meet the cost of food and

[4] To some extent, the issue is addressed in the present *Multilateral Agreement*, but the onus is on "publics" in the provinces to monitor compliance with the agreement. Whether the publics can undertake this task effectively is open to reasonable doubt, as the effort requires both administrative and financial expertise that is costly for the non-profit sector to purchase.

special programmes voted by the responsible community board, e.g. for music and art teachers, holiday programmes, etc.[5] As discussed in the main text, an agreed part of the government grant to centres would be earmarked for staff salaries, resources and the improvement of programme quality. In parallel, the OECD team encourage consideration by governments of providing a free, half-day educational session for all young children from the age of four years, with parent contributions being required only for the other half of the day.

In other countries, new approaches to funding early childhood services can be observed:

- *A significant increase in ministry budgets for early childhood services*, e.g. in the UK since 1998, budget has more than doubled. Significant budgetary increases need also to be envisaged to meet the extra costs of the *appropriate* inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream education.[6]
- *A pooling of resources and sharing of costs across ministries, social partners, local communities and users*, whenever common objectives are being attained for young children and their families, e.g. if wrap-around education and care for young children improves in turn social inclusion and labour market expansion, there is little reason why the capital and operational costs should not be shared across a range of ministries and other interest groups.[7]
- *A shifting of educational and social financing toward quality early childhood education and care*, where research indicates that the human and social capital returns on investment are greatest. Equality of opportunity in education is also enhanced.
- *Cost-effective coordination of early childhood policies at central level and concentration of services at local level*, in particular for the 3-6 year olds. This means in practice integrating the management of care and early education at central level, and using school premises for afternoon recreational and early development services. For example, rather than investments in rented and other premises, it has seemed more rational in many countries to invest significantly in school infrastructure, and to bring early education, full-day and out-of-school care together in one location. Concentration of centre-based services helps to reduce costs considerably, improves quality and facilitates working parents.[8]
- *A sharing of tasks with the voluntary, community and private sector*, and the incorporation – whenever possible - of non-public providers into a publicly funded and professionally managed system. The contribution made by non-governmental organisations and local private providers to the state network is often significant, even essential.
- *The provision of operational subsidies to accredited providers that maintain high quality standards*. Operational subsidies are particularly needed in rural and remote settlements, and when voluntary early education bodies accept children from disadvantaged or special needs backgrounds, while keeping fees within the range defined by the public authorities.
- *The enlistment of support from the corporate and business sectors*. In many countries, employers are among the main supporters of early childhood services. In the Netherlands, for example, employers are expected to provide a crèche or purchase child care places in accredited centres for the young children of their employees. In yet other countries, e.g. Korea and Mexico, firms employing a certain quota of young women are required by law to establish an on-site day care centre or subsidise child care expenses for their employees.
- *The emergence of alternative funding mechanisms*. In the Nordic countries, local authorities have powers to raise taxes, which are devoted to supplementing the State allocation for health, social welfare and early education services. In Belgium and Italy, a significant part (about 1%) of social security and/or corporate tax is channelled toward child care. In Finland, the alcohol tax has been used for many years to subvention early

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5. A ceiling of 20% on aggregate parent fees allows for a graded fee structure, ranging from parents who cannot afford even meal expenses (for whom all fees would be waived) to high-income families from whom up to 50% of costs could be recuperated.

6. Apart from the human rights perspective (Article 23, Convention on the Rights of the Child), additional costs for special needs children in early education are more than recuperated through downstream savings on special education units, remedial teaching and social security.

7. In many countries, for example, builders are expected to include in their costs for housing estates, the construction of appropriately-designed crèches and schools. Local communities and industry can also be expected to contribute.

8. Respect for the rhythms and interests of young children needs to be ensured in services attached to schools. In addition, the ministry, county or other body responsible for managing early childhood services at local level will need to consult and involve the community and voluntary sector in provision linked to the school.

childhood services, in particular, out-of-school care. In the USA, grants from the large corporations toward early childhood services are common, as tax concessions are granted by the public authorities for large donations. State lottery proceeds are also used to fund early childhood services and to provide subventions to needy third-level students wishing to enter college.

Recommendations with regard to access

7. *Continue efforts to expand access while promoting greater equity*
8. *In so far as possible, include children with special educational needs in public early development services*
9. *Reinforce polices to support and include Aboriginal children*

As mentioned, access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is low in Canada. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 years find a place in a regulated service (see Table 6, Background Report of Canada). If one were to subtract from these figures kindergarten enrolments at the age of 5 years, and the Quebec figures for the whole age range, the extent of the Canadian shortfall appears more clearly, not least when compared to the enrolment rates of 3-6 year olds in other OECD countries.[9]

For Canada, the development of the successful public kindergarten/school system toward full-day provision is a long-term solution to be considered. In terms of social justice and educational returns, it is reasonable to direct this expansion first toward at-risk children and their families. Not to do so may reinforce socio-economic stratification, and create a vicious cycle of poverty and educational under-achievement for the children of low income and Aboriginal families.

In parallel, a means of stimulating expansion in the community child care sector needs to be found. This is unlikely to happen in a satisfactory manner without considerable incentives and subsidies. Even moderate-income families find themselves in difficulty, as with insufficient services, costs to parents have risen. The OECD team was informed on many occasions that affordability has become a serious issue for many families in Canada – hence their recourse to informal care.

Where children with special educational needs are concerned, the OECD team witnessed in Canada some skilled examples of inclusiveness within public provision. However, according to OECD (2004a), although Canadian provinces have inclusion programmes in the school system, there is little evidence available on children receiving additional resources at pre-primary level. In the child care sector, data on children with special needs are even scarcer, which suggests that legal rights to access and state investments in inclusion may be weak at this level. Canadian research (Irwin, Lero and Brophy, 2000) confirms the hypothesis, noting that it can be extremely difficult for parents to obtain *appropriate* child care for children with disabilities, since staff lack training, buildings are not adapted, and funding is lacking.

In Canada, according to the child poverty figures, Aboriginal children and children of lone parents are particularly vulnerable, as their parents live more frequently on welfare, or work irregular hours in low paid jobs. The issue is analysed in more depth in Chapter 4 of the *Country Note*. Despite impressive efforts by First Nation and mainstream groups, First Nation peoples still suffer from exclusion and poverty, and Aboriginal children are today amongst Canada's most vulnerable. From its visits, discussions and the literature available, the OECD team proposes for consideration:

- That effective approaches to providing education to Aboriginal children and employment to Aboriginal families living in urban areas need to be found;
- That the co-construction of solutions with First Nation groups, witnessed in several provinces in Canada, should be continued and reinforced;
- That focussed educational research be undertaken with regard to Aboriginal children, with the fullest data possible on their educational outcomes (not just enrolments), and ongoing support provided to them at all levels of education;
- That governments may wish to draw on the expertise and experience of other countries with significant First Nation populations, most notably Finland, New Zealand and Norway, where much progress has been made for these children at early childhood level;

9. Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and the UK enrol around 90% of their children by the age of 4 years in free, early education services.

Recommendations to improve quality

10. *Develop a national quality framework for early childhood services across all sectors, and the infra-structure at provincial level to ensure effective implementation;*
11. *Link accreditation of services to structural requirements (adequate funding; sufficient numbers of qualified staff; favourable child/staff ratios; enriched learning environments and resources…) and the achievement of quality targets;*
12. *Review ECEC professional profiles, improve recruitment levels and strengthen the initial and in-service training of staff;*
13. *Provide publicly-funded, intensive interventions in all disadvantaged areas;*
14. *Provide attractive indoor and outdoor learning environments ;*
15. *Co-ordinate Canadian ECEC research and through funding, orient it further toward important policy issues;*

According to several commentators, the quality debate in Canada has been a restricted one. To simplify: in the education sector, the debate has tended to focus on readiness-for-school goals. In the child care sector, quality has been undermined by the struggle to survive on inadequate subsidies. The structural underpinnings of quality have been neglected; in particular, sufficient funding and adequate profiling and training of staff (*Background Report of Canada*, 2003).

Among the quality initiatives that the OECD team recommends for consideration are:

- *That basic structural requirements are respected in early childhood services*, i.e. regular and sufficient financing, especially in areas of disadvantage; support to centres from an active public management system; adequate training and work conditions for staff; reasonable child/staff ratios; enriched learning environment, both indoors and out; regular surveys and evaluations conducted to monitor overall achievement…As observed throughout the report, there are many good reasons for provincial governments to opt for a partially free, publicly managed system, with enhanced resources being provided when centres need to respond to disadvantage;
- *That a national quality framework for early childhood services across all sectors be formulated:* A national quality framework could include: a statement of the values and goals that should guide early childhood centres; a summary of programme standards, that is, how programmes will be structured in terms of child/staff ratios, teacher qualifications… to facilitate development and learning; third, an outline of the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values that children at different ages can be expected to master across broad developmental areas; and fourth, pedagogical guidelines outlining the processes through which children achieve these goals, and how educators should support them. Such frameworks can help to guide and support professional staff in their practice, to promote an even level of quality across age groups and provinces, and to facilitate communication between staff, parents and children (see OECD, 2001, *Starting Strong*).
- *That managerial structures at provincial and ground levels be strengthened to ensure effective formulation, implementation and monitoring of policy:* We have already noted that the continuity of sound, evidence-based policy presupposes the presence of early childhood expertise and critical mass in government administrations. At ground level, expert managers or pedagogical advisors are also needed to map services, to create networks (especially across dispersed settlements), to ensure monitoring and to organise the support services that centres and staff need. At centre-level, managers and heads of service will ensure good working conditions and provide ongoing motivation and professional development for staff. Especially in disadvantaged areas, purpose-developed, parent/community involvement programmes need to be co-constructed with parents and effectively implemented;
- *That every effort be made to train and remunerate correctly professional staff in all early childhood services.* Research shows strong links between training/staff support and the quality of ECEC services (Bowman et al, 2000), and the long-term wisdom of retaining qualified staff (CQCQ Study Team, 1995). Experienced staff have a major impact on children's well-being and learning achievement. In well-run centres, they will have an individual plan and portfolio for every child, and provide to parents regular feedback on their child's progress. Regular discussion, team-planning, auto-evaluation and in-service training are features of staff life in a quality centre.

Where *at-risk children and families* are concerned, research from other countries suggests that interventions are more acceptable and more effective when:

- *Early learning programmes take place within a general framework of anti-poverty and community development policies*. (Kagan and Zigler, 1987, Morris et al., 2001, Sweeney, 2002). To break the poverty cycle and thus protect the socio-emotional development of young children from disadvantaged homes, wider issues such as employment and jobs training, social support, income transfers, housing policies, substance abuse and community resources need to be addressed.
- *Programmes are multi-functional and engage communities as well as children*: that is, programmes are strong on family engagement and support as well as providing high quality learning experiences to the children. A national evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres in England has shown, for example, that integrated socio-educational services bring multiple benefits to children, families, and practitioners (Bertram et al., 2002; Pascal et al., 2002).
- *Programming for children is relatively intensive*: research indicates that the effectiveness of programmes for young children is enhanced by intensity (Leseman, 2002) and year-long duration (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2003). There is evidence to show, for example, that a structured, half-day, early learning programme should be incorporated into all full-day services.[10] The OECD team suggests that consideration be given to providing an intensive morning programme to all Canadian children from the age of 4 years.
- *Programmes are pedagogically sound and conducted by appropriately trained profes*sionals. A high quality programme in early childhood implies child–initiative and involvement, as well as structuring and interaction with adults. If a programme is over-focussed on formal skills, it is more likely to provide opportunities for children to fail, and to develop a higher dependency on adults, promoting in children negative perceptions of their own competencies (Stipek et al. 1995).
- Depending on the degree of disadvantage, *enriched health and nutrition inputs* may be necessary to ensure that young children can take full advantage of the early childhood service.

An important indicator of quality is *the level of investment in and the appropriateness of early childhood buildings and learning environments*. From the perspective of the review team, design standards for child care premises in Canada seemed poor, partly a reflection of many makeshift arrangements in low-rent buildings. In addition, materials and resources were often conventional and of doubtful learning quality. Plastic toys, tabletop games and worksheets are in general rather limited learning tools. Used in isolation, they seldom provide young children with the high–quality experiences that generate language development, reasoning and communication challenges.

Direct access to the outdoors and the quality of the yards attached to centres also seemed unplanned from a pedagogical perspective. Children need space to move, to express themselves and to take part in an active exploratory curriculum. Moreover, given current concerns about child health and obesity, it seems fitting to build opportunities for vigorous exercise into the curriculum. An outdoor environment intelligently constructed, e.g. a discovery garden, can be a very rich learning environment for young children. Nature offers to children high levels of variety and interest, and invites active, complex play.

Research, evaluation and monitoring are also important components of quality. Canada has an impressive number of research programs and researchers of international status, and a wide range of effective analytic and monitoring tools, e.g. the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and its offshoot studies or the Early Development Instrument developed by McMaster University... Several of the provinces, for example PEI, sponsor a broad range of evaluations and analyses (*For Our Children: a strategy for healthy child development*, 2000). Yet, it seemed to the OECD review team that research initiatives and directions may be conceived separately within the provincial administrations and university departments. In other countries, annual or biennial policy reviews are a means of focussing attention on policy issues and of confronting current practice with up-to-date research and evaluation. Regular policy reviews provide an opportunity for research institutes and universities to tender for

[10]. The Dutch research conducted by Leseman indicates that five half-day, structured programmes per week produces more effective learning than shorter sessional programmes. Full-day programmes are even more effective especially in at-risk circumstances. The Chicago research underlines the efficacy of bridging programmes across holiday periods. However, recent EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-School Education) research from the UK (DfES, 2002a) suggests that full-time educational provision for young children does not yield better results than part-time, but that benefits increase in line with the length of time in pre-school. Greater educational advantage may therefore be drawn from extending kindergarten to all 3-year olds than by moving to full-time provision for the immediate pre-school group… a solution that may not meet fully the needs of working parents.

important pieces of research and to organise their research more rationally. Given the potential importance of research in the coming years for Canadian ECEC, the OECD team propose for consideration:

- That a regular policy review and research cycle for early childhood education and care be initiated in each Province and across Canada, bringing together governments, national research institutes and university early childhood research departments. The mechanism also allows governments to take a lead, and mobilise the research community around issues of national or provincial concern.
- That public accountability mechanisms be further enhanced through rigorous and comparative data collection, such as the annual reports and data collection required for participation in the Multilateral Framework. In this regard, according to several researchers, it would be helpful if early childhood data collection and analysis at provincial level were properly supported and supervised by Statistics Canada or other expert body;
- That independent and regular evaluations of large programmes be undertaken, e.g. of Aboriginal Head Start, urban Aboriginal or community services within a region or large city, with the intention both of raising standards and forming staff;
- That the publication of an annual review of policy and data on ECEC be ensured in each province and at national level, such as the CRRU volume *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*, with the inclusion of a section summarising provincial or Canadian early childhood research for the particular year.

Conclusion

The facts and opinions expressed in the *Country Note of Canada* are the sole responsibility of the review team. From its perspective, Canada has a number of real strengths, not least its democratic and social traditions that have placed it consistently toward the top of the UN Human Development Index. However, child poverty and children's services are still outstanding issues. The time seems ripe for a more dynamic and organised approach to these challenges, especially from the side of the public authorities. Our *Upstream policy recommendations* at the beginning of this summary underline our appreciation of the multilateral initiatives, while suggesting for the provinces a renewed responsibility to guide, fund, manage (at policy level), expand and integrate into one system all early childhood services for children from 1-6 years.

The recommendations proposed in the report are presented not as hard and fast solutions but as proposals for consideration by the Department of Social Development, the participating provinces and the major stakeholders who are working toward improved access and quality for young children in Canada. While we have received every help from Social Development, the provincial authorities, and from many researchers, stakeholders and practitioners in Canada, they have no part in any shortcomings which this document may present.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

1. The *Country Note for Canada* is an output of the *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, a project launched by the OECD's Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. In their communiqué, the Education Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access to and quality in early childhood education and care, with the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning (OECD, 1998). A detailed description of the review's objectives, analytical framework, and methodology is provided in OECD (1998).

2. To date, twenty-one countries have volunteered to participate in the review: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries provide a diverse range of social, economic and political contexts, as well as varied policy approaches toward the education and care of young children. Early in the review process, representatives from the participating countries reached agreement concerning the framework, scope and process of the review, and identified the major policy issues for investigation. Information on the visits and several reports from the review may be viewed on the project web site: <www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews>. A first Comparative Report on these visits, entitled *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, was released at an international conference held in Stockholm, 13-15 June 2001.

3. In scope, the reviews cover children from birth to compulsory primary school age, as well as during the transition to primary schooling. In order to examine thoroughly what children experience in the first years of life, the reviews adopt a broad, holistic approach. In addition to an analysis of policy and services, consideration is given to national social policies and various environmental influences on children's early development and learning. In sum, with the aid of ministries and the major actors in ECEC in each country, the reviews aim to:

- Distinguish and investigate the ECEC contexts, major policy concerns, and policy responses to address these concerns in participating countries;
- Explore the roles of national government, decentralised authorities, NGOs and other social partners, and the resources devoted to planning and implementation at each level;
- Identify and evaluate feasible policy options suited to different contexts;
- Highlight particularly innovative policies and practices; and
- Contribute to the INES (Indicators of Education Systems) project by identifying the types of data and instruments to be developed in support of ECEC information collection, policy-making, research, monitoring and evaluation.

More specifically, the expert teams investigate concerns about *quality, access* and *equity*, with an emphasis on policy development in the following areas: regulations; staffing; program content and implementation; family engagement and support; funding and financing.

The review process

4. In preparation for the visit of the OECD review team, the national ministries responsible for early childhood education and care commission *Background Reports* on ECEC policy and services in their countries. Guided by a common framework that has been accepted by all participating countries, *Background Reports* are intended to provide a concise overview of the country context, the major issues and concerns in ECEC policy and provision, innovative approaches, and the available quantitative and evaluation data. The Background Reports are an important output of the review process. Their preparation should normally be a participative exercise at country level, and should provide a forum of debate for the different stakeholders in early childhood in each country.

5. After analysis of the *Background Report* and other relevant documents, review teams composed of an OECD Secretariat member and experts with diverse analytic and policy backgrounds (see Appendix I) visit each participating country. The visit is co-ordinated by the sponsoring ministry or ministries. In the course of the visit, the team interviews the major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice, and are invited to observe a number of examples of early childhood programs. The selection of particular sites reflects in general not only a concern for geographical diversity but also the desire to show the review team a representative selection of both typical and innovative services. After the country visit, the OECD produces a *Country Note* that draws together the national background materials and the review team's observations.

The review procedure in Canada

6. Canada was the 17th country to be reviewed by the OECD. Prior to the visit a Background Report on ECEC policy was commissioned by Human Resources Development Canada (now Social Development Canada)[11]. From 21st September to October 3rd, 2003, a review team comprising an OECD secretariat member and three experts with diverse research and policy backgrounds (see Appendix I) visited Canada. The visit was co-ordinated by Social Development Canada, and a member of Social Development Canada also accompanied the team throughout the visit. Given the logistical (and time-zone) difficulties of travelling across a country as large as Canada, the review team were very grateful for the smoothness of the organization, and the comprehensiveness of the documentation that was provided in all the Provinces visited. In particular, the team visited four provinces: Prince Edward Island; British Columbia; Saskatchewan, and Manitoba; and met with stakeholders from across these provinces, in addition to national stakeholders and experts while in Ottawa. The team had the opportunity to observe numerous examples of early childhood programs and services for children aged 0-6 years in these provinces, including an excellent Inuit program in Ottawa.

7. Canada being such a large country, it was impossible for the review team to carry out as comprehensive a review as we would have wished in the time allotted. Provincial autonomy also meant that decisions to host the review were taken at provincial level. We are very grateful to the four provinces which invited us to review their policies and commend them for their foresight. Together, these provinces gave the OECD team a picture of the socio-geographical diversity that characterizes Canada, although we also realize that there was a great deal that we did not cover, including the major French-speaking province, Quebec, with its unique approach to the public financing of family and early childhood services. We trust, however, that our visit – aided by the *Background Report* and our meetings with a wide range of policy-makers - has been sufficient to enable us to make some general observations about ECEC in Canada, as well as making more specific comments on the provinces we visited.

[11]. Formerly Human Resources Development Canada, which became Social Development Canada in December 2003.

Structure of the Canadian Country Note

8. This *Country Note* presents both a description and the review team's analysis of key policy issues related to ECEC in Canada. It draws considerably on the information provided in the *Background Report*; and on formal and informal discussions, document analysis, relevant research literature, and the observations of the review team. It is structured as follows:

- *Chapter 1*, the present chapter of the report, outlines the goals and framework of OECD early childhood education and care (ECEC) reviews. A premise of the OECD approach is that the development of young children in a country depends greatly on equitable social structures, on family support for early development and learning; and on the informed practice of qualified professionals who provide - in a caring environment - structured programmes appropriate for young children.

- *Chapter 2: Contextual issues shaping ECEC policies in Canada,* is descriptive in emphasis, and describes geography and demographic developments, women's participation in the labour market, social and economic issues, and other factors related to the organisation of early childhood services.

- *Chapter 3: Current ECEC policy and provision in Canada,* outlines the key features of the current system. It describes the broad structure of the services, regulatory procedures, funding, access and affordability, staffing and training, research and monitoring, and how these indicators compare with one another across different forms of provision and among different groups. It also describes recent policy initiatives at both federal and provincial levels, with a special section devoted to the four provinces reviewed:

- *Chapter 4: Issues for ECEC in Canada* is analytic in nature and explores the coherence of policies from the point of view of quality, access and equity. It also considers the position of Aboriginal children, and some critical organisational and financing issues.

- *Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations* puts forward for consideration by the Canadian authorities a number of suggestions and recommendations. They are offered in a spirit of professional dialogue, basing our proposals on experience of other countries and on our discussions with the ministries and the major stakeholders in the field whom we interviewed in Canada.

Acknowledgements

9. The OECD wishes to thank Social Development Canada, Canada, the four Provincial Governments and the Federal-Provincial Review Steering Committee for making the review of Canada possible. In particular, we would like to acknowledge their efficient preparation of the Background Report and the comprehensive program of visits planned for the OECD team. In all provinces, members of the Steering Committee had organised meetings for us with a wide range of well-informed stakeholders; officials who meticulously organised our daily schedules and gave us a comprehensive picture of the organisation of ECEC in each province; ministers who took time off from their busy diaries to meet with us; managers and teachers in schools, kindergartens and child care centres who responded with patience to all our questions; the family day caregivers who invited us into their homes. Though not wishing to single out any one group above others, we feel that a particular mention is owed to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council whose welcome and generosity in giving took our breath away. A special word of thanks is due also to the authors of the Background Report – Gillian Doherty, Martha Friendly and Jane Beach. Their report was not only comprehensive but a model of clarity and analytic skills.

Throughout the *Country Note*, the suggestions offered by the review team are tentative, in recognition of the difficulty facing a visiting team—no matter how well briefed—in fully grasping the variety and complexity of a country-wide system and the range of issues that need to be taken into account. Even when multiplied by the number of members of a team, a ten-day review is limited in terms of the amount of data that can be collected and verified. For this reason, our recommendations are offered to the sponsoring ministries not as hard and fast conclusions, but in a spirit of professional dialogue for the consideration of Canadian administrators, specialists and stakeholders. We trust, however, that our external perspective, based on many years' experience in the early childhood field, will prove to be a useful basis for discussion and progress. To lessen the potential for misunderstanding or error, it is assumed that the *Country Note* will be read in conjunction with the *Background Report of Canada*, as the two documents are intended to complement one another.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING ECEC POLICIES IN CANADA

Geography and population

9. Canada has a number of distinctive geographic characteristics. Occupying the northern half of the North American continent, Canada is the second-largest country in the world with a land mass of more than nine million square kilometres that encompasses six time zones. It incorporates part of the arctic, but one of its southernmost city, Toronto, is on a latitude with Barcelona and other Mediterranean cities.

10. With only 3.1 residents per kilometre, Canada is also one of the least densely populated of the industrialized nations (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Population density, however, varies considerably from one area to another. Most of Canada's inhabitants live along the southern border with the United States in a corridor of not more than a few hundred kilometres from north to south. Four regions: (1) southern Ontario centred on Toronto; (2) Montreal and its surrounds; (3) Vancouver and its surrounds and the southern part of Vancouver Island, which includes Victoria; and (4) the Calgary-Edmonton corridor account for 51% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2002a). While almost 80% of the population lives in urban communities of more than 10,000, there are rural and remote northern areas where the population density is considerably less than the average 3.1 residents per kilometre.

Population

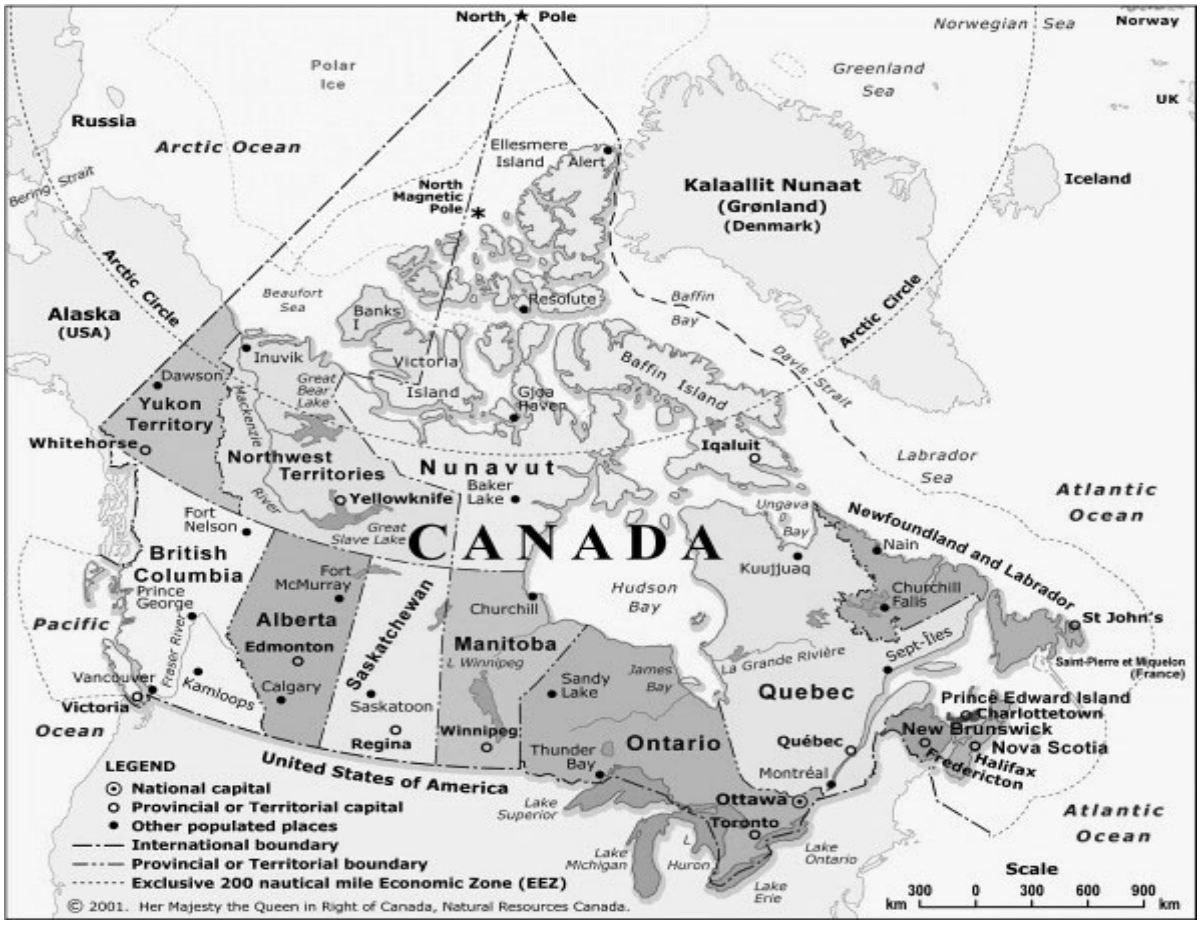
11. According to the 2001 census, Canada's population was more than 30 million - an increase of 4% since 1996.[12] In its majority, this population is composed mainly of the descendents of settlers from the colonising powers, France and Great Britain, or from more recent immigrant stock, who today tend to come from non-European countries. The original inhabitants of Canada, the Inuit on the north and the First Nations, constitute just over 3% of the population but their child numbers are beginning to increase significantly in some provinces (see below).

12. The first wave of settlers, primarily from France and Britain, began to arrive in Canada as early as the sixteenth century. Canada is officially a bilingual country with 22.9% of Canadians speaking French as their first language and 59.1% reporting English as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2002b). French is the majority language of Québec and there are, in addition, large francophone populations in Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick.

13. The immigrants who began arriving in Canada in the middle part of the 19th century came mostly from Europe. However, 58% of those who immigrated in the 1990s were born in Asia and the Middle East with only 20% from Europe (Statistics Canada, 2003c). Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Canadians reporting a mother tongue other than English or French rose by 12% to 5.3 million - more than one in six people in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2002b). The most prevalent other languages are Chinese, Italian, German, Punjabi, and Spanish. Immigrants have played and continue to play a major role in shaping Canada's pluralist society. Canada's multiculturalism policy supports the diversity of Canadian society and encourages the preservation of different languages and cultural practices.

[12]. Most of this growth has occurred in the large urban areas along the U.S. border; overall, population growth in the rest of the country is essentially static (Statistics Canada, 2002a).

Canada, provinces and territories and their main cities



Source: Natural Resources Canada. Available on-line line at: http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/national/can_politial_e_refe.

Table 1 - Provincial/territorial capitals and populations, 2001

Province or territory	Capital city and its total population	Total provincial/territorial population	Provincial/territorial population age 0- 6
Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's (172,920)	521,986	30,305
Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown (58,360)	135,294	9,325
Nova Scotia	Halifax (359,185)	908,007	58,180
New Brunswick	Fredericton (81,345)	729,498	46,020
Québec	Québec City (682,755)	7,237,479	462,075
Ontario	Toronto (4,682,250)	11,410,046	821,320
Manitoba	Winnipeg (671,275)	1,119,583	86,255
Saskatchewan	Regina (192,805)	978,933	73,975
Alberta	Edmonton (937,840)	2,974,807	226,900
British Columbia	Victoria (311,905)	3,907,738	252,060
Nunavut	Iqaluit (5,236)	26,745	4,035
Northwest Territories	Yellowknife (16,540)	37,360	3,720
Yukon	Whitehorse (21,410)	28,674	2,070
CANADA	Ottawa-Hull (1,063,665)	30,007,094	2,076,240

Source: Statistics Canada (2002c). Age and sex for population, for Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan areas and Census Agglomerations, 2001 Census – 100% data. Catalogue number 95F0300XCB01004.

Governance and economy

14. Canada is a federation consisting of ten provinces and three territories, one of which, Nunavut, was created in 1999. Generally, the federal government is responsible for matters considered necessary for the development and maintenance of a national community, for example, foreign policy, defence, citizenship, First Nations people living on reserve, currency, trade and commerce, the postal service, and criminal law. The provinces/territories are responsible for matters that assist in the preservation of distinctive regional communities and the conduct of everyday life. These include education, social services, health services, labour standards, property and civil rights, language rights, and the administration of the criminal justice system. Control over natural resources is divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. The provinces/territories frequently delegate certain powers to local municipal governments.

15. In the past, the Canadian economy relied heavily on resource-based industries such as farming, forestry, fishing, mining and the production of oil and natural gas. These industries continue to be an important part of the economy in some provinces. There is also a manufacturing sector, most notably the auto industry. However, resource-based and goods producing industries represent a declining proportion of employment while the proportion of jobs in the services sector has increased substantially. In 2001, the services sector employed three out of four Canadians. (*Background Report of Canada* , 2003).

Demographic and social features impacting on ECEC

16. Key trends that have an impact on ECEC include:

- A declining birth rate;
- A birth rate in the Aboriginal community that is much higher than in the population as a whole coupled with migration to urban areas by Aboriginal families;
- A large number of immigrants with a high proportion coming from non-European countries;
- High labour force participation by mothers with young children;
- An increase in the proportion of lone-parent families with young children;
- Significant rates of child poverty;
- Increased incidence of non-traditional work hours;
- Employment policies, in particular, the recent parental leave extension.

Declining birth rates for mainstream Canada

17. In the late 1970s, the birth rate dropped below population replacement levels and has remained well below it ever since. In 1999, it was 1.52 children per woman (Statistics Canada, 2002e). Overall, child populations in Canada, particularly those under age six, declined throughout the 1990s except in the Aboriginal community.

Table 2 - Total number of children by age group, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001 - Canada (rounded in 1000s)

Number of Children (1000S)	1992	1995	1998	2001
0-2 years	1165	1142	1065	1017
3-5 years	1095	1202	1181	1074
TOTAL	2260	2344	2246	2091

Source: Friendly, Beach, & Turiano, 2002.
Note: Information for the territories is not available for 1992, 1995 and 1998; therefore the above table includes only provincial populations.

High Aboriginal birth rate and urban migration

18. Aboriginal people - an umbrella title referring to First Nations, Métis (descendents of Aboriginal people and European fur traders/settlers who have developed their own Métis culture) and Inuit (the original inhabitants of some parts of the far north) - make up 3.3% of the total population.[13] The highest concentrations of Aboriginal people live in the three territories and the two prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Almost half of all Aboriginal people, 49%, live in large urban areas, 31% live in reserves and settlements, and 20% live in rural non-reserve areas. Their birth rate is one-and-a-half times higher than the national average (Statistics Canada, 2003b). Between 1996 and 2001, the Aboriginal population increased by 22.2% in contrast to an increase of 3.4% in the non-Aboriginal population. In 2001, 35% of the Aboriginal population was under age 15, compared with 19% of the non-Aboriginal population. There has been a slow but steady urban migration over the past decade or so with 49% of all Aboriginal people living in large urban areas in 2001, up from 47% in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

19. The urban migration of Aboriginal families has led to a demand for Aboriginal ECEC services in large urban areas, and has highlighted the need for non-Aboriginal services to respect children's Aboriginal culture in their programming. Though this is a goal put forward by many policy-makers whom we met, the OECD team was surprised to find relatively little inclusion of Aboriginal symbols, values and practices in mainstream educational settings. This is perhaps a reflection of the low integration of Aboriginal peoples into mainstream Canadian economy and politics. Changes are gradually taking place, for example in the designation of Nunavut (*Our Land* in Inuktitut) and the restoration of self-determination to its people. Provinces with growing Aboriginal minorities are also working to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into their curriculum frameworks. However, the overriding impression gathered by the team was that the Aboriginal population – not least in urban settings - is very disadvantaged in comparison to the population as a whole.

Immigration patterns

20. In 2001, immigrants accounted for 18.3% of Canada's total population, up from 17.4% in 1996 (*Background Report of Canada* , 2003). Between 1991 and 1996, the immigrant population increased by 15.5% – more than three times the 4% expansion of the Canadian-born population (idem.). Many immigrants have children and almost 2/3 of the children who came to Canada between 1997 and 1999 spoke neither English nor French (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). The majority of new immigrants settle in Canada's largest urban areas of Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary-Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2003d). In some kindergarten classes in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, more than 50% of the students were born outside Canada or are from recently immigrated families (Larose, Terrisse, Bédard and Karsenti, 2001). ECEC services are called upon to assist young immigrant children from very different cultures adjust to Canada and learn English or French.

A high labour force participation by mothers with young children

21. In the past few decades, there has been a major shift away from the older model of the single-earner family. It is now the norm for both parents in a two-parent family to be employed while their children are young. Most recently, the largest participation rate increase between 1976 and 1999 has been among women with pre-school-age children. In 2001, 62.3% of mothers of children whose youngest child was less than age 3 were in the labour force as were 73.4% of women whose youngest child was 3-5 years of age. The Government recognizes and supports women's participation in the labour market through its family leave policies, although, as we point out in subsequent chapters, the various employment policies are not dovetailed with child care.

[13]. The population statistics for First Nations and Metis are likely to be understated as Statistics Canada figures are based on information collected through a self-declaration process in which some individuals are reluctant to participate.

An increase in the proportion of poor lone parents with young children

22. In 2001, lone-parent families represented 16% of all families in Canada in contrast to 10% in 1971. In 2001, 268,005 lone-parent families (20%) had at least one child under age 6 living at home (Statistics Canada, 2002f). Labour force participation is much lower among female lone parents. In 2002, 47% of the lone mothers with a child under age three were employed, compared with 62.3% of mothers in two-parent families. At the same time, among those with a youngest child aged from 3-5 years, 60% of female lone parents were part of the paid labour force compared with 70% of mothers in two-parent families. However, despite being employed, the economic situation of many of these women has improved little, as over half are employed in jobs paying less than $10,000 annually (see Table 3 below). The costs of regulated child care are likely to be a disincentive for many such women. A recent qualitative study of lone parents with young children concluded that although a majority wished to return to the labour force, "*the deck is stacked against lone mothers"* (Mason, 2001).

Table 3 - Number and percentage of female lone parents in Canada, 2001, by employment income group

MIN $10,000	251,000	55%
$10,000-$15,000	32,800	7%
$15,000-$20,000	22,500	5%
$20,000-$30,000	46,200	10%
$30,000-$40,000	48,600	11%
$40,000-$50,000	25,000	5%
$50,000 -	31,100	7%

Source: Social Policy Simulation Database Model (SPSD/M), Statistics Canada.

Increased incidence of non-traditional work hours

23. Between 1976 and 1996, service industries grew from 67% of employment in Canada to 75%, primarily in the consumer services areas such as the retail and the hospitality industries (Heisz and Cote, 1998). A burgeoning service industry and growing demand for round-the-clock services have led to a growth in non-standard work hours. In 1995, 32% of Canada's labour force worked in some form of non-day or rotating shift job (Johnson, 1997). Part-time work (fewer than 30 hours a week) among women is common. In the age group 25-44, one in five women (21.2% in 2002) is working part-time. The proportion of women in non-standard work arrangements is growing. In 1999, 41% of the employed women were working in a non-standard arrangement, including part-time work, temporary work, self-employment and multiple job holding (*Background Report of Canada*, 2003). New immigrants are more likely to be of child-bearing age, to operate on the margins of the economy and to work non-traditional hours.

24. As a result of these new patterns of work, there is an increased demand for child care services beyond the traditional day-time, Monday to Friday mode of delivery and for increased flexibility in enrolment and attendance. However, it is difficult to see how the challenge can be met by new services alone. The question of family-friendly work practices must also be considered – an issue still to be resolved in most industrialised countries. Already, where infants are concerned, Canada has taken a balanced approach by introducing a year-long parental leave. A similar balance between work requirements and the need to rear young children has yet to be organised.

Significant rates of child poverty

25. Discussions of poverty in Canada draw on a variety of data which use different measures of low-income (Fellegi, 2002). In the table below we use pre-tax levels from data compiled by the Canadian Council on Social Development. (Post-tax income levels would give a slightly lower figure). These figures also give a rate for all children 0-18. Poverty rates are falling, from a high of 20.4% in 1996 to 16.5% (1.1 million) in 2001. Poverty is disproportionately concentrated amongst Aboriginal peoples.

Table 4 - Child poverty in provinces-2000

	RATE	*NUMBER*
Canada	16.5%	1,139,000
Newfoundland & Labrador	26.2%	30,000
Prince Edward Island	13.3%	4,000
Nova Scotia	17.6%	36,000
New Brunswick	15.4%	25,000
Quebec	18.7%	293,000
Ontario	14.4%	391,000
Manitoba	22.1%	58,000
Saskatchewan	18.1%	44,000
Alberta	15.2%	112,000
British Columbia	16.7%	146,000

Source: Canadian Council on Social Development: Statistics Canada, 2002

26. Although decreasing slightly from the figure above, child poverty in Canada – affecting over a million children - is high by OECD standards. According to the most recent report (Campaign 2000, 2003), it remains firmly entrenched at over 15% of child population.[14] Though less severe than in the USA and UK, levels are three times greater than in Nordic countries, where child poverty after income redistribution, child benefits, affordable child care and other measures affects 4 to 5% of children (Bradbury & Jäntti, 1999).[15] Moreover, since 1991, welfare benefits for families with children in Canada have fallen by more than 23% in absolute terms (National Council of Welfare: Welfare Incomes 2000-2001). The situation is particularly bleak for many one-parent families. Lone mothers are most likely to be amongst the poorest groups, most likely to be in receipt of benefits and most likely to be earning low wages (according to the Campaign 2000 report, 60% of employed mothers earn less than $10 CAD per hour). Given these levels of poverty, it is important that employment strategies supporting families to move from welfare to employment or training are efficient. The data given in the next chapter suggests that this may not be the case in that access to child care and to subsidies can be both inequitable and insufficient.

27. At the same time, Canada has always been very highly placed in the United Nations Development Index, and as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it has accepted the challenge to improve all children's circumstances. In addressing child poverty, the country has created a comprehensive mix of income assistance and community services. Social expenditures such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax Credit, Aboriginal Head Start, extension of Employment Insurance parental leave benefits and the Early Childhood Development Initiative have all contributed to a reduction in child poverty.

28. The National Child Benefit (NCB) is the most comprehensive of these schemes. Under the NCB, the Government of Canada provides direct income support through its NCB Supplement to low-income Canadian families with children. The Government of Canada introduced the NCB Supplement as a component of the federal Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) system, which provides direct income assistance to approximately 80% of Canadian families with children. The Supplement is a foundation upon which provinces and territories can build to support the transition from welfare to work. In turn, provinces, territories and First Nations adjust social assistance and child benefit payments and use the savings to invest in new and enhanced benefits and services for low-income families to meet local needs and priorities. In 2002/03, families with net family incomes below $22,397 received maximum federal child benefits (both the NCB Supplement and the Canada Child Tax Benefit base benefit) for the first child of $2,444 per year or

[14]. The report measures hardship using Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs. By those standards, a family of four is considered to be in poverty if its before-tax income is less than $37,253 in a major city and less than $25,744 in a rural area.

[15]. A more stringent measure of low-income is generally used in European countries. A child is considered to live in poverty if his/her family has access to less than 60% of the median standard of living, that is, the family has less than 60% of the disposable median income after direct taxes have been removed.

$206.66 per month and slightly less for the second and subsequent children. However, according to several informants, initiatives for the poorer families are still far from sufficient. Their chances of emerging from poverty are frequently undermined on the one hand, by bad jobs and low wages and on the other, by lack of affordable child care services and difficulties in accessing benefits and job training,

Employment policies: Family leave

29. Responsibility for maternity and for parental/adoption leave is split between the federal and the provincial/territorial governments. Provincial/territorial legislation sets the length and conditions of job-protected leave while partial salary replacement is covered through the federal government's Employment Insurance program. Maternity and parental leave are treated as employment benefits. People taking maternity and/or parental/adoption leave are job-protected under legislation and have the right to be reinstated in the same/comparable pre-leave employment with the same salary and benefits. The federal benefit amounts to 55% of insurable earnings with a maximum benefit of $413 per week. The maximum benefit amounts to about 60% of the average income of a full-year, full-time working woman, which is about $35,300 (2001).

Table 5 - Federal parental leave benefits, 2002

Program	Child's age	Eligibility criteria	Benefit
Maternity Leave Benefit	Prenatal to one year of age.	Birth mothers who have a minimum of 600 hours of insurable work in the previous 12-month period or since their last claim	55% of insurable earnings with a maximum benefit of $413 per week for 15 weeks.
Parental/ Adoption Leave Benefit	For a birth mother following maternity leave, for fathers usually within 12 months of the child's birth, for adoptive parents when the child comes into custody regardless of the child's age.	Birth mothers or fathers or adoptive mothers or fathers with a minimum of 600 hours of insurable work in the previous 12-month period or since their last claim.	55% of insurable earnings with a maximum benefit of $413 per week for 35 weeks. May be taken by either eligible parent or shared between them.

Source: Human Resources Development Canada (2002). ***Maternity, parental and sickness benefits.***

30. Canada has now an extended system of parental benefits for the first year after birth - a very positive development for Canadian families. Parental leave measures promote bonding between the child and other family members, and removes the need for public authorities to provide expensive child care for infants on a massive scale. The fact that this leave-program is within Employment Insurance also means that there is an incentive for going back to work after the leave-period. Available information on the use of this benefit reveals that the use of parental leave has greatly increased. In the fiscal year 2001/2002 about 211,270 claims for parental leave had been registered, 185,550 claims from mothers and 23,120 from fathers. 84% of mothers in paid employment received maternity and/or parental benefits, instead of 79% in the year before. On average, parents use 86.2% of the full year of benefits available to them. There is one common exception, viz. the majority of self-employed women who do not qualify for Employment Insurance and therefore do no have access to maternity or parental benefits (Townson, 2003). Most of them (85% in 1999) do not receive employment insurance benefits. 80% of self-employed women were back on the job one month after child birth.

31. In the past many more women than men experienced a career break or interruption, mostly to care for family. Nearly two-thirds of women (62%) who ever held paid jobs have experienced a work interruption of 6 months or more. In contrast only a quarter of all men (27%) have had a career break/ interruption lasting 6 months or more. As benefits have increased, this picture may change slightly; but in all countries with generous leave entitlements, the take-up is still greater by women than by men. (Moss & Deven, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT ECEC POLICY AND PROVISION IN CANADA

32. The provision of care and education for young children is a necessary condition for ensuring the equal access of women to the labour market. At the same time, provision needs to be of high quality if it is to contribute to early development and lay solid foundations for lifelong learning. When sustained by effective fiscal, social and employment measures in support of parents and communities, early childhood programming can further help to provide a fair start in life for all children and contribute to social equity and integration. In Canada, the main ECEC services are kindergarten and child care. In the present chapter, these services are discussed separately, and then compared.

33. Young children and their families are also supported by the publicly funded health care system, public education, by various government income transfers such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement, maternity and parental leave benefits, and child and family services such as family resource programs. These are considered in more detail, and their fit – or lack of fit – with kindergarten and child care programs is discussed. The monitoring and research of these ECEC initiatives are also discussed. Finally, we discuss the complex arrangements for policy-making at federal and provincial levels.

1. A brief overview of Canadian ECEC

34. Compulsory schooling generally begins at age 6 in Canada. Early childhood education and care programmes are generally assumed to be for children under this age, but also include out-of-school provision for children up to 12 years. On the basis of legislative status, programs for young children under school age in Canada fall into three broad categories:

1. ECEC within a provincial/territorial education system

- Kindergarten normally for-five-year-olds, except in Prince Edward Island. Usually part-time for two to three hours a day, or in rural areas, alternate days. (In Ontario, junior kindergarten is provided for four year olds in almost all school boards. In other provinces, pre-kindergarten for children under age 5 may be provided primarily for children at risk.)
- School-age child care in Quebec.

2. Early childhood education and care regulated under provincial/territorial child care legislation

- Child care centres, usually offering care for the children of working parents or students. These are almost all privately operated, usually on a not-for profit basis, and charging fees.
- Some nursery schools and preschools, mainly part-day programs for children 2-5. They are often run by community organizations and subsidized in part for children at risk.
- Regulated family child care, in the provider's own home.
- School-age child care in some provinces/territories.
- Aboriginal child care and Aboriginal Head Start programs in some provinces/territories (in some areas, programs on-reserve are regulated by First Nations themselves, and not by provincial authorities).
- Kindergarten in Prince Edward Island.

3. Unregulated situations used by parents for child care

A substantial proportion of children – perhaps 60% - are also placed in unregulated care, full-time or for part of the day:

- Unregulated family child care by relatives.
- Unregulated family child care by others in the provider's own home.
- An adult hired by the parents to care for the child in the child's own home (a nanny or sitter).
- Nursery schools and preschools and school-age child care in some provinces/territories.
- Aboriginal child care and Aboriginal Head Start programs in some provinces/territories.
- Recreation programs, summer camp programs.
- Child minding, for example when parents are engaged in federal programs teaching English or French as a second language.

2. Kindergarten

Kindergarten provision

35. There is greater agreement in Canada about the need for education-based services than about child care. All provinces provide some kind of kindergarten, usually but not invariably, as part of a school-based offer.

Table 6 - Kindergarten for children in the year prior to grade 1, 2001

Province or territory	Total 5 year olds, 2001	Enrolment 2001	Length of program
Newfoundland and Labrador	5,490	5,465	Part-day, 570 instructional hours/year. Children may be required to alternate morning and afternoon attendance in blocks of time throughout the year.
Prince Edward Island	1,775	1,698	Part-day, minimum 2.5 instructional hours/day. Programs may operate between 5-10 months/year.
Nova Scotia (called grade primary)	10,730	10,368	Full-time as per primary grades - minimum of 4 instructional hours/day.
New Brunswick	8,330	Data not Available	Full-time as per primary grades, minimum 832.5 instructional hours/year
Québec (called maternelle)	86,310	77,500	Full-time, 846 instructional hours/year.
Ontario	152,070	133,686	School boards decide on the schedule. Usually part-day; or may be full-day on alternate days. Full-day every day in francophone school boards.
Manitoba	15,585	13,854	School boards decide on the schedule. Usually part day, or may be full day or alternate days.
Saskatchewan	13,045	11,961	Part-time. Schedules vary by school division. Legislation requires 80 full-school-day equivalents of instruction/year.
Alberta (called early childhood services)	40,455	40,948[1]	Minimum of 475 instructional hours/year. Schedule depends on the provider.
British Columbia	46,405	38,290	2.4 instructional hours/day.
Nunavut	685	655	Minimum of 485 instructional hours/year and maximum of 6 hours/day.
Northwest Territories	715	556	Minimum of 485 and maximum of 570 instructional hours/year
Yukon	380	400 (1)	Usually part-day, 475 instructional hours/year.

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.
Note: (1) In the Yukon, some four-year-olds are enrolled in kindergarten intended for the year prior to grade 1, especially in situations where the child is deemed to be at risk for developmental problems.

36. Several provinces also provide kindergarten through the education system for younger children.

Table 7 - Kindergarten offered by the education system for younger children, 2001

Province	Description
Nova Scotia	One school board offers a pre-kindergarten program for inner-city schools and children deemed to be at risk. Enrolment was 140 children in 2001.
Québec	Québec has two programs available for some four-year olds: pré-maternelle, a part-day program initially established for inner city children (enrolment of 6,932 in 2001) and passe-partout, originally developed for low-income children in rural areas. Passe-partout consists of 24 sessions; 16 with children only and 8 with parents included (enrolment 8,879 in 2001).
Ontario	A majority of school boards offer junior kindergarten for children who are age four by December 31. Enrolment was 114,669 in 2001.
Manitoba	Two school divisions offer a half-day nursery school program for four-year olds. Enrolment figures for 2001 are not available.
Saskatchewan	Pre-kindergarten may be provided part-day for four-year-olds deemed to be at risk and living in targeted communities that meet specific criteria. Enrolment was approximately 1,400 in 2001. Boards of Education also have the authority to provide programming for pre-school age children, beginning at age 3, who have an identified disability as outlined in the Education Act (1995).
Alberta	Children with special needs may attend Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) at age 2 ½ if the child has a severe disability or at age 3 ½ if the child has a moderate disability. Enrolment in 2001 was 250 two-year-olds and, 1,329 three-year-olds.

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

Regulation of kindergartens

37. Each provincial/territorial legislative body, through its Education (or School) Act and regulations, defines the powers and responsibilities of the department or ministry of education and of the school boards or divisions for which it is responsible. Responsibility for ensuring the education of students and compliance with provincial/territorial legislation and regulations is delegated by the Minister to school boards or divisions (and in New Brunswick, District Education Councils) composed of locally-elected trustees. The school boards, in turn, delegate much of the day-to-day responsibility to superintendents of education who establish the school district budget, are responsible for hiring teachers and other staff, supervise the schools and are responsible for ensuring that programs meet the needs of students in the jurisdiction. The exception is Prince Edward Island where the Department of Health and Social Services shares the responsibility with the Department of Education, and is responsible for licensing kindergartens, staff certification, and the provision of funding to support the inclusion of children with special needs. Kindergarten is a part of the early childhood system on PEI and therefore operates under the *Child Care Facilities Act*.

38. Most provinces/territories prescribe required courses of study for the children and give the Minister the power to establish common curricula. Some jurisdictions address safety issues in the Education Act or its regulations, for example, by requiring all schools to have fire safety and emergency evacuation plans. Others deem health and safety issues in schools to come under the provision of the provincial/territorial Public Health Act and the Occupational Standards Act. These pieces of legislation may have provisions for regular on-site inspection of individual schools. In some situations the local municipality in which the school operates may require regular fire and health inspections.

39. In all provinces/territories except Prince Edward Island, kindergarten teachers must have either a four-year undergraduate degree which includes teacher training, or a three-year degree with an additional year of teacher training. No province/territory requires kindergarten teachers to have special training in early childhood although one requires a kindergarten practicum. Kindergarten teachers are required to follow the curriculum for kindergarten prescribed by their province or territory. Several provinces/territories legislate a maximum class size for kindergarten while in others individual school boards set maximum class sizes for all schools in their area. While actual kindergarten class sizes are not known, suggested maximums across Canada range from 19 to 23. In PEI, where kindergarten is part of the early childhood system, staffing for kindergarten falls under the *Child*

Care Facilities Act. The requirement for certification is a Diploma in ECEC. Individuals with a related diploma or degree would be required to complete additional early childhood specific courses prior to certification. Kindergarten class sizes on PEI are 1 educator to 12 children.

Funding of Kindergartens

40. Kindergartens are a well-regarded service, educational in orientation, but mostly part-time and therefore not compatible with working hours. They are generally much better resourced than other services for young children. Kindergarten on PEI remains community based. Parents have the choice to register their child in a stand alone program or a full day early childhood program offering kindergarten. Many parents working outside the home require full day care for their children and will choose the latter option. The following table gives a very approximate picture of education expenditure on kindergartens.

Table 8 - Estimated expenditure on kindergarten, 2001

Province or territory	Available information
Newfoundland and Labrador	Information not available
Prince Edward Island	$150-$200 per month per pupil, depending on the location of the program. Estimated total for 2001 = $3.2 million
Nova Scotia	Information not available
New Brunswick	Information not available
Québec	Average spending per pupil in maternelle (age 5) = $1,694 per year Average spending per pupil in pré-maternelle (age 4) = $1,879 per year Average spending per four-year-old in passé-partout = $900 per year
Ontario	Average spending per four-year-old = $6,645 per year (full-time equivalent) Average spending per five-year-old = $6,673 per year (full-time equivalent)
Manitoba	Average spending per pupil = $3,500 per year
Saskatchewan	Average spending per pupil in rural areas = $2,189 per year Average spending per pupil in Regina/Saskatoon = $2,069 per year
Alberta	Average spending per pupil = $2,184 per year
British Columbia	Average spending per pupil = $4,200 per year
Northwest Territories	Average spending per pupil = $4,570 per year
Nunavut	Information not available
Yukon	Information not available

Source: **Friendly et al., 2002.**
Note: Where amounts are provided, they are estimates, not actual.

3. Child care

Child care provision

41. The primary purpose of child care in Canada has been seen politically as the provision of care in the parent's absence, generally so that parents can be employed or engage in training/education. In recent years, there has been a move away from this conception of child care to a more developmental perspective, at least among the administrators, national councils and community groups responsible for the sector. Though this concern has not always been translated into reality by governments – often due to inadequate financing -– six provinces/territories provide part-day programs called nursery schools or pre-schools under the child care legislation for children aged 2-5, and three provinces/territories provide nursery schools and pre-schools which are not regulated. These are purposefully intended to enhance the development of children rather than to provide care.

42. Almost all child care regulated under provincial/territorial child care legislation, is privately operated, usually on a not-for-profit basis by parent groups, voluntary boards of directors, or other non-profit entities (77%) or on a private, for profit basis by individuals or businesses. An estimated 10-15% of

the non-profit subtotal is run by governments (primarily in Ontario) or public school boards (especially in Quebec). The following table sets out the levels of child care provision across provinces and territories.

Table 9 - Availability of centre places 2001

Province or territory	Total children age 0 – 6	Number children age 0–6 (rounded) with mother in the paid labour force	Number of regulated centre spaces (full- and part-time) for 0-6s	% 0–6s for whom there is a centre space	% 0-6s with formally employed mother for whom a centre space
Newfoundland and Labrador	30,305	17,900	3,632	12.0%	20.3%
Prince Edward Island	9,325	6,700	2,517	27.0%	37.5%
Nova Scotia	58,180	40,300	11,314	19.4%	28.1%
New Brunswick	46,020	31,300	5,820	12.7%	18.6%
Québec	462,075	304,100	77,271	16.7%	25.4%
Ontario	821,320	538,800	118,110	14.4%	21.9%
Manitoba	86,255	49,200	14,130	16.4%	28.7%
Saskatchewan	73,975	46,900	4,106	5.6%	8.8%
Alberta	226,900	134,900	41,001	18.1%	30.4%
British Columbia	252,060	147,800	36,383	14.4%	24.6%
Nunavut	4,035	n/a	750	18.6%	n/a
Northwest Territories	3,720	n/a	866	23.3%	n/a
Yukon	2,070	n/a	669	32.3%	n/a
CANADA	2,076,240	1,317,900	314,477	15.2%	23.9%

Source: **Friendly et al., 2002**.

Note: The above table includes part-day centre spaces but does not include regulated family day-care spaces as age-specific information on the number of children age 0-6 enrolled in this type of care is not available. Overall, regulated family child care accounts for approximately 20% of all regulated child care spaces in Canada for children age 0–12. Provincial/territorial regulatory policy for child care generally rests with departments of social and/or community services. Each province/territory has its own child care legislation that defines the programs and the conditions under which they may operate and a process for monitoring child care services and enforcing the legislative standards/regulations.

43. Despite the tolerance of unregulated care, Canadian administrations assume correctly that regulated care is better than unregulated care (NICHD, 1997), and for the most part, subsidies are attached only to regulated care. Provincial/territorial child care regulations provide a baseline of health and safety standards below which licensed facilities must not fall. While there are differences in the types of services regulated and different requirements exist for those services across provinces/territories, there are a number of common features. All provinces and territories regulate child care centres for children younger than school age and family child care homes. Other ECEC programs such as nursery schools/preschools, school-age child care programs and Aboriginal Head Start may or may not be regulated under the child care legislation, depending on the particular province/territory. Each province/territory also regulates the maximum number of children that may be cared for in an unregulated family child care home.

Regulation of Child Care Centres

44. Provincial/territorial child care standards/regulations all contain definitions of the types of centre-based ECEC programs that may be licensed. Most of the standards are concerned with the obligations of the licensee to ensure that the requirements pertaining to the physical space and the training level of staff are met and upheld. Each centre is licensed to operate with a maximum number of children, determined by physical space and in some provinces/territories by legislated centre maximum sizes. Some provinces/territories legislate maximum numbers of children permitted in a group (group size), and /or the maximum capacity of a given centre.

45. In some aspects of regulation there is considerable variation across provinces/territories, e.g.:

- Staff-to-child ratios in centres range from 1:3 to 1:5 for infant care;
- Some provinces/territories stipulate a maximum size for each age group while other provinces/territories do not;
- Training requirements for staff vary from no post-secondary training required to a requirement that at least two-thirds of the staff must have at least two years of post-secondary early childhood education (ECE) training.
- One province requires that at least one person working with a group of infants and toddlers have specialized infant/toddler training;
- Specialized training for working with children with special needs is required in two provinces;
- Two jurisdictions, Manitoba and Québec, regulate the maximum fee that may be charged in funded child care centres; and
- In some provinces legislation specifies that a hot lunch be provided; in others, children bring their own food.

Table 10 - Child care centre regulations pertaining to children under age 6, 2003

Province	Variable	Requirement
Newfoundland and Labrador	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 24 months 1:3 6 25 – 36 months 1:5 10 37 – 69 months 1:8 16 57 – 84 months 1:12 24
	Staff training requirements	Each group of children must have at least one staff person with a minimum of one year of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and at least one year of experience. All other staff must have completed a 30 – 60 hour orientation course. The centre operator must have not less than Level II certification (equivalent to a two year diploma in ECE) for the age range classifications for which the child care centre is licensed and two or more years of work experience in a licensed child care centre.
Prince Edward Island	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 24 months 1:3 6 25 – 36 months 1:5 not specified 37 – 60 months 1:10 not specified 61 – 72 months 1: 12 not specified
	Staff training requirements	Centre supervisors and at least one full-time staff member must have a minimum of an ECE diploma from a post secondary ECE program (one or two year programs) combined with experience (one year diploma with three years experience, two year diploma with two years of experience) or a university degree in child study or related field with additional ECE courses and experience. All staff in ECE centres must complete 30 hours of in-service training in each three year period.
Nova Scotia	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 17 months 1:4 10 18 – 35 months 1:6 18 36 – 60 months 1:8 24 18 – 60 months (half-day) 1:12 24 5 – 12 years 1:15 25
	Staff training requirements	The centre director and 2/3 of staff must have completed a training program in ECE or its equivalent (2 years ECE experience; one full credit course in either human growth or development; completion of 25 hours of seminars/workshops on curriculum development and programs for young children).
New Brunswick	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 23 months 1:3 9 24 – 36 months 1:5 10 37 – 48 months 1:7 14 49 – 60 months 1: 10 20 61 – 72 months 1:12 24
	Staff training requirements	The director OR one in four staff is required to have one year of ECE training or its equivalent. There are no training requirements for other staff.

Québec	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 18 months: 1:5 / not specified 19 – 47 months: 1:8 / not specified 48 – 71 months: 1:10 / not specified 6 – 12 years: 1:20 / not specified
	Staff training requirements	Two-thirds of the staff in non-profit centres must have a college diploma or a university degree in ECE. One-third of staff in commercial centres must have a college diploma or university degree in ECE.
Ontario	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 17 months: 3:10 / 10 18 – 30 months: 1:5 / 15 31 – 60 months: 1:8 / 16 61 – 71 months: 1:12 / 24 6 – 12 years: 1:15 / 30
	Staff training requirements	Centre supervisors and one person with each group of children must have an ECE diploma (minimum two year program), or its equivalent. Supervisors must also have a minimum of two years experience.
Manitoba	**Ratio and group size**	Mixed Age Groups / **Ratio** / **Group size** 12 weeks to 2 years: 1:4 / 8 2 – 6 years: 1:8 / 16 6 – 12 years: 1:15 / 30
	Staff training requirements	Two-thirds of staff must have at least two-years ECE training or satisfactory completion of a Child Day Care Competency-Based Assessment. Directors of full-time centres (infant and preschool) must also complete a specialization program or have a degree in an approved field.
Saskatchewan	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** Infants: 1:3 / 6 Toddlers: 1:5 / 10 30 – 72 months: 1:10 / 20
	Staff training requirements	All staff employed for at least 65 hours a month must have completed a 120-hour child care orientation course or equivalent provided through a community college.
Alberta	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 12 months: 1:3 / 6 13 – 18 months: 1:4 / 8 19 – 35 months: 1:6 / 12 3 – 5 years: 1:8 / 16 5 – 6 years: 1:10 / 20
	Staff training requirements	One in four staff is required to have at least one year of ECE training. All other staff must have completed at least the government's 50-hour child care orientation course. In addition, a full-time program director with Level 3 (two years or its equivalent) must be on staff at the centre at all times.
British Columbia	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 36 months: 1:4 / 12 30 – 72 months: 1:8 / 25
	Staff training requirements	Under age 36 months: a group of up to four children must have one infant/toddler educator (10 months of ECE training plus 500 hours of supervised work experience and special infant/toddler training). A group of 5 to 8 children must have one infant/toddler educator and one early childhood educator (10 months of ECE training plus 500 hours of supervised work experience. Age 30 – 72 months: A group of up to 8 children must have one early childhood educator with 10 months ECE training plus 500 hours of supervised work experience. A group of 9 to 16 children must have one early childhood educator and one assistant (with one course in early childhood education).
Nunavut	**Ratio and group size**	**Ratio** / **Group size** 0 – 12 months: 1:3 / 6 13 – 24 months: 1:4 / 8 25 – 35 months: 1:6 / 12 3 years: 1:8 / 16 4 years: 1:9 / 18 5 – 11 years: 1:10 / 20
	Training requirements	There are no early childhood staff training requirements.

Northwest Territories	**Ratio And group size**		**Ratio**	**Group size**
		0 – 12 months	1:3	6
		13 – 24 months	1:4	8
		25 - 35 months	1:6	12
		3 years	1:8	16
		4 years	1:9	18
		5 – 11 years	1:10	20
	Training requirements	There are no early childhood staff training requirements.		
Yukon	**Ratio and group size**		**Ratio**	**Group size**
		0 – 17 months	1:4	8
		18 – 24 months	1:6	12
		3 – 6 years	1:8	16
	Training requirements	20% of the staff in a centre must have two or more years of ECE training or its equivalent and an additional 30% must have one year of ECE training. Other staff must have completed at least a 60-hour child care orientation.		

Source: **Friendly et al., 2002**.
Note: Until 1999, Nunavut was part of the Northwest Territories and it is still using its child care legislation.

Regulation of family child care

46. Every province/territory stipulates how many children a family child care home may care for before regulation is required. There are two different approaches that provinces/territories adopt to regulate family child care: (1) An individual license is issued to each family child care home, or (2) The government contracts with or licenses a family child care agency which is responsible for ensuring that the standards are met in the family child care homes it supervises. Again, there are considerable variations between provinces, for example the number of children and the mix of ages permitted and the required training in those provinces where providers are required to take training.

Table 11 - Family Child care Regulations

Province or territory	Variable	Requirements
Newfoundland and Labrador	Permitted number of children	Up to 6 children, including the provider's own children not attending school on a full-time basis. No more than 3 children may be under age 36 months, of these, no more than 2 may be under age 24 months.
	Educational requirements	Orientation course of 30-60 hours, depending on the age group for whom the provider is responsible. A minimum of 30 hours of professional development every three years.
Prince Edward Island	Permitted number of children	Up to 7 children of mixed ages, including the provider's own children under age 12, with a maximum of three children under age 2.
	Educational requirements	A 30-hour training course and an additional thirty hours of in-service training in each three year period.
Nova Scotia	Permitted number of children	Up to 6 children of mixed ages, including the provider's own preschool children, or up to 8 school-aged children including the provider's own school-age children.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training or experience is required.
New Brunswick	Permitted number of children	Up to 6 children of mixed ages, including the provider's own children under age 12. There may be no more than three infants or five children age 2-5.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training or experience is required.
Quebec	Permitted number of children	Up to 6 children, including the provider's own children under age 9, no more than two children may be under age 18 months. If there is a provider and an assistant: Up to 9 children, including the providers' own children under age 9, no more than four children may be under age 18 months.
	Educational requirements	A 45-hour training course on child development, health, safety and nutrition, and organization of the physical environment.
Ontario	Permitted number of children	Up to 5 children, including the provider's own children under age 6. No more than two children may be under age 2, and no more than three may be under age three.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training or experience is required of providers. However, agencies are required to hire a home visitor for every 25 homes. Home visitors are required to have completed a post-secondary program in child development/family studies and have at least two years experience.

Manitoba	Permitted number of children	Up to 8 children under age 12, including the provider's own children under age 12. No more than five children may be under age 6, of whom no more than three may be under age 2. If there is a provider and a second licensee: Up to 12 children under age 12, including the providers' own children under age 12. No more than three children may be under age 2.
	Educational requirements	An approved 40-hour course within the first year of providing child care.
Saskatchewan	Permitted number of children	Up to 8 children, including the provider's own children under age 13, of the eight, only five may be younger than age 6 and of these five, only two may be younger than age 30 months. If there is a provider and an assistant: Up to 12 children, including the providers' own children under age 13. Of the 12 children, only ten may be younger than age 6 and of these four, only two may be young than age 30 months.
	Educational requirements	Providers working on their own must complete a 40-hour introductory ECE course within the first year of being licensed. The charge provider in a situation of two providers must complete a 120-hour ECE course within the first year of being licensed. All providers are required to engage in six hours of professional development each year.
Alberta	Permitted number of children	Up to six children under age 11, including the provider's own children under age 11, with a maximum of three children under age 3 and no more than two children under age 2.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training is required.
British Columbia	Permitted number of children	Up to seven children under age 12, including the provider's own children under age 12. of the seven children, no more than five may be preschoolers, no more than three under age 3, and no more than one under age one.
	Educational requirements	A course on the care of young children (length not stipulated) or relevant work experience.
Nunavut	Permitted number of children	Maximum of eight children under age 12, including the provider's own under age 12. No more than six children may be under age 5 or younger, no more than three children may be younger than age 3, and no more than two children may be under age 2.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training is required.
Northwest Territories	Permitted number of children	Maximum of eight children under age 12, including the provider's own children under age 12. No more than six children may be age 5 or younger, no more than three children may be younger than age 3, and no more than two children may be under age 2.
	Educational requirements	No early childhood training is required.
Yukon	Permitted number of children	Up to eight children, including the provider's own children under age 6. Of the eight children, no more than four infants or eight preschoolers. If there is a provider and an assistant: Four additional children may be cared for.
	Educational requirements	Completion of a 60-hour ECE course within the first year of being licensed.

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

47. Not only do the regulations vary, but the regulatory process also fluctuate across provinces. In BC for example, registration procedures are carried out under the auspices of health, and are part of a wider regulatory remit for the health staff concerned. In Saskatchewan, Manitoba and PEI there are dedicated staff to carry out regulatory functions, and they also have an advice and support role. In several provinces/territories, the inspector must have ECEC experience, but in others they do not have to have any background in ECEC. Additionally, annual inspections by the local Fire Marshall's office and health inspections are required.

48. In family child care there are also different models to monitoring, depending on the family child care model being used in the province/territory. The monitoring is done either by a government official or by staff from a child care agency or organisation. In unregulated child care there are no requirements for external monitoring, and government plays no role.

49. There are no costings available for regulatory activities and no measures of their efficacy. Generally, in OECD countries, regulation is an expensive process, but the poorer the service, the more it is deemed to be necessary. From this perspective, a longer term economic solution for governments may be to invest from the beginning in high quality teachers capable of centre- and team-evaluations, rather than to tolerate low quality services that need a great deal of external inspection and monitoring.

Funding of Child care

50. In order to gain access to the employment market, women with young children need affordable child care. A child care subsidy system operates in all provinces. In most cases this subsidy is less than the average cost of full child care – a hard-to-meet shortfall if there is more than one child. The net income at which lone parents are no longer eligible for subsidy varies by province. Partial subsidies may be available for some children. These subsidies are in most provinces *only* available for regulated care, of which there is a shortage.

Table 12 - Child care fee subsidy eligibility levels, rates and average fees in regulated centres, 2001

Jurisdiction	Family size	Full subsidy to ($)	Partial subsidy to ($)	Maximum subsidy in child care centres	Average monthly fees in cc centres
Alberta	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	20,520 24,120	31,680 44,520	Infants $475/month All other ages $380/month	$522.84 all ages
British Columbia	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	18,984 [1] 23,016	27,816 31,846	Infants $585/month Toddlers $528/month 3-5 yrs $368/month	Infants $705 Toddlers $662 3-5 yrs $494
Newfoundland & Labrador	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	14,160 15,240	20,280 25,560	0-24 mo $30/day 2-12yr $21.25/day	18 mo-3yrs $380 3 yr-5.11 yr $360
Prince Edward Island	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	13,440 19,200	25,440 51,040	0-2yrs $24/day 2-3yrs $20/day 3+ yrs $19/day	0-2yrs $520 2-3yrs $432 3+ yrs $412
Nova Scotia	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	16,812 17,712	24,540 34,092	$14.95/day all ages minimum parent fee of $2.25/day	0-17 months $565 18 mo-36 mo $490 3-5 yrs $488
New Brunswick	All family sizes 1 child, 2 years or older 1 child, under age 2	15,000 15,000 15,000	— 23,100 24,180	0-2 yrs $18.50/day 2-6 yrs $16.50/day 6-12 $9.25/day	0-17 months $482 1.5-5.11 yrs $418 school age $226
Québec	Not applicable [2]	—	—	—	$5/day for all ages
Ontario	n/a [3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Manitoba [4]	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	13,787 18,895	24,577 40,475	$4,756/child/year for full-day pre-school aged children. Programs may surcharge parents $2.40/day/child	Infants $560 [5] Preschool: $376 School age $238
Saskatchewan	1 parent, 1 child 1 parent, 2 children	(gross) 19,668 (gross) 20,868	(gross) 31,920 (gross) 45,720	Infant $325/month Toddlers $285/month Preschool $235/month School age 200/month Parents pay minimum of 10% of the cost	Infant $ 481 Toddlers $420 Preschool $384 School age $277
Yukon Territory	1 parent, 1 child 2 parents, 2 children	20,424 30,144	31,104 51,744	Infant $500/month Preschool $450/month	Infant $630 Toddler $550 Preschool $514
N.W.T.	n/a [6]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

Notes: (1). Effective April 2002, several changes were made to British Columbia's subsidy program and eligibility levels were reduced. (2). Québec provides publicly funded programs for all and additionally subsidizes parents who cannot afford the $5.00 a day fee. As of January 2004, this fee was increased to $7.00/day. (3). Eligibility for subsidy is determined by provincially determined needs tests with income being only one of a number of items considered. Each municipality can determine the rates paid to service providers on behalf of parents, a situation which creates some variation across the province. There are no province-wide maximum income levels for full or partial fee subsidies. (4). Data for Manitoba is based on the children in the sample families being preschool children (aged 2-6 years). In Manitoba child care fees and subsidy levels are different for infant (under two years) and preschool spaces. (5). Manitoba sets maximum fees for all children in funded centres and for all subsidized children in non-funded centres. (6). Eligibility for subsidy varies according to the number of family members, actual shelter costs, community of residence and eligibility for enhanced benefits. These needs are based on Income Assistance Program schedules. A needs assessment is applied so there is no set break-even point. There is no territory-wide maximum subsidy. Maximums are set for type of care.

51. Provinces and territories do not directly deliver child care services. As described above, they provide subsidies on behalf of low income parents, usually lone parents. They also provide funds to community groups and businesses to assist in their provision of child care. There are a variety of grants, in addition to fee subsidies, to support child care. These include operating grants for specific purposes e.g. wage enhancement; funds for including children with special needs; capital and start up funds.

52. The availability of these grants is subject to political change, as can be seen from the fluctuations between 1992-2001. Some provinces spent *less* on regulated child care in 2001 than in 1992. In fact, during the early and mid-1990s, many provinces and territories reduced or froze their grants to child care providers, a period during which many other social programs were cut. In the Table below, the total figure for Canada reflects the considerable investment by Quebec. If Quebec figures are excluded then the overall increase in expenditure since 1992 is marginal. Even taking into account the new resources invested by the Federal government since 2000, these figures suggest that - given the rise in the cost of living since 1992, and not least, the rise in child care fees (National Council of Welfare, 1999) - services are likely to be under-funded for what they currently provide, let alone for what they seek to achieve.

Table 13 - Allocation for regulated child care for each child aged 0-12 years living in the province or territory– 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001 (adjusted to 2001, rounded) [(1)] by each provincial and territorial government

Province/territory	1992 in $s	1995 in $s	1998 in $s	2001 in $s
Newfoundland and Labrador	17	33	40	101
Prince Edward Island [(2)]	125	74	116	187
Nova Scotia	83	73	110	91
New Brunswick	32	28	49	105
Québec	138	190	272	980
Ontario	273	318	257	232
Manitoba	245	258	248	338
Saskatchewan	71	74	93	97
Alberta	151	146	111	110
British Columbia [(3)]	111	169	211	274
Northwest Territories [(4)]	154	87	Not available	Not available
Nunavut	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not available
Yukon Territory [(4)]	468	574	Not available	Not available
CANADA	179	220	222	386

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

Notes: (1). Estimates based on total provincial and territorial allocations and total number of children age 0 – 12 years; (2). The 2001 figure for Prince Edward Island includes kindergarten, which is under child care legislation. As a result, the 2001 figure is not comparable to the figures in the previous years; (3). Figures for British Columbia for fee subsidies are estimated because British Columbia allows subsidies to be used in both regulated and unregulated care. These figures have been adjusted accordingly; (4) Figures for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon on based on estimated numbers of children age 0 – 12 and therefore are not directly comparable to the figures given for the other jurisdictions

53. Across provinces access to child care is unequal; but even when a child goes to a child care centre, the funding per child is unequal. It is true that rural child care, especially in isolated communities is likely to be more expensive than in urban areas, but this is not a sufficient explanation for the differences.

Table 14 Proportion of provincial/territorial allocation for different categories of expenditures in regulated child care spaces for children age 0 – 12, by each provincial and territorial government, 2001

Item	NF	PEI	NS	NB	QUÉ[1]	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	NWT	YT	NU
Parent fee subsidy	79.9%	75.4%	66.4%	55.0%	N/A[2]	66.4%	51.3%	60.1%	86.6%	36.8%[3]	51.3%	63.8%	28.4%
One-time grants, e.g. start-up	2.6%	Nil	0.1%	Nil	2.5%	Nil	Nil	0.8%	Nil	1.2%	Nil	0.7%	Nil
Recurring operating grants to centres	4.1%	6.1%	23.0%	22.8%	97.4%[4]	25.7%[5]	32.4%	27.3%	Nil	36.8	48.7%[6]	34.7%	71.6%[7]
Recurring family child care agency administration fee	3.1%	N/A	0.3%	N/A	See footnote #5	See footnote #6	N/A	N/A	9.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special needs funding	10.3%	18.5%	7.8%	22.2%		7.9%	11.6%	4.6%	3.7%	24.0%	No data available	0.8%	No data available
Other grants	Nil	Nil	2.3%	Nil	0.1%	Nil	4.8%	7.3%	Nil	1.4%	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

Notes:

1. The figures for Québec relate only to children age 0 – 4 inclusive.
2. Québec parents pay $5/day for child care with the government picking up the remainder of the cost. Working parents who cannot afford $5/day are eligible for a subsidy that reduces the cost to $2/day, information on the total amount of this subsidization is not available.
3. BC also provides parent fee subsidies to parents using license-not-required child care.
4. This item also covers the costs of the administration fee for the family child care component in the centres de la petite enfance (CPE) and funds to assist in the inclusion of children with special needs.
5. The statistic for the grants to centres in Ontario includes wage enhancement grants for centre staff and regulated family child care providers and the administration fee for family child care agencies.
6. Includes funding for start-up.
7. Includes funding for start-up.

4. Family Services

Family Support Services

54. The OECD reviews are primarily concerned with early education and care – that is policies that support children's learning as well as provide support to women in the workplace. Family support services have been developed in all OECD countries, but tend to become more controversial in countries where levels of poverty are high, and dysfunctional or multi-problem families are common. In theses circumstances, they tend to become associated with dysfunction, rather than being established as services that cater for every child's right to education. Moreover, it has been said that they contribute to the growth of a dependency culture in given milieux. As the cost of benefit payments has risen in recent decades, there is now considerably more emphasis by the government on getting women, especially poor women, back into training and work. However, welfare to work measures are often not supported satisfactorily by the provision of either sufficient or adequate early education and care.

Family Resource Programs

55. In Canada, family resource programs offer a range of services to families, both site based services and outreach. The centres or programs are intended to support families in bringing up their children, but, as the National Council of Welfare point out "*The primary users of family resource programs are mothers who are not in the paid labour force…the programs are usually housed in community centres, often in high-risk neighbourhoods where there are many poor families."* (National Council of Welfare. 1999:63)

56. Family Resource programs include information on child development, parenting education, home visiting, toy and equipment lending, parent and child toddler drop-ins, nutrition programs, and provision of material supports such as food and clothing. The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, (FRP Canada) which grew out of a toy libraries association, represents 1500 family resource programs (not all family resource programs belong to this network). It also publishes a newsletter, *Play and Parenting Connections*.

57. Information about these programs is provided in two reports: *Case Studies of Canadian Family Resource Programs* (Kyle and Kellerman, 1998) and a *Status Report on Canadian Family Resource Programs.* (2002). These reports give an overview of resource centres, but at the local level, monitoring for efficacy is unclear. However, government family resource programs, such as the Government of Canada's Community Action Program for Children conduct regular evaluations. FRP Canada states that it values the voluntary nature of participation in family resource programs, but they also seem to be used on a referral basis by social workers concerned about at risk children. One family resource program we visited had little data on its client group, but the director did say that some families were referred. She added that if a centre is perceived to be used for referrals, it becomes stigmatized, and other non-referred families are very unlikely to choose to use it. Two other programs we saw were more firmly located in a wider range of community activities, and appeared to be much busier.

Other Family Supports

58. There was a wide range of family supports provided by the jurisdictions participating in the OECD review. These supports included visiting programs for new mothers; infant development programs for children under three who are at risk of developmental delay; disability support programs; early intervention programs for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; programs to allow children to enrol in community sports, musical and arts activities; workshops on family literacy for pregnant and parenting youth, and autism therapists. The four provinces we visited featured such family support services prominently in their literature. They are indicative of a broad approach to families and children, which also includes health interventions. From what the OECD team could gather, family services are not always systematically provided and many tend to be one-offs.

5. Aboriginal Children

59. In 2001, there were 33,155 children age 0-4 and 36,945 age 5-9 living on reserve in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003f). Responsibility for ECEC services for Aboriginal children living on-reserve rests with the federal government which also funds some services for Aboriginal children living off reserve.

Kindergarten

60. The federal government directly funds the provision of elementary education on-reserve, including the provision of kindergarten in those on-reserve schools that provide this program. In 2001/02, 13,409 children attended junior kindergarten or kindergarten in one of these schools (Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada/Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002). Children living on reserves where the school starts with grade one (no kindergarten) are eligible to enrol in kindergarten for five-year-olds in a nearby off-reserve provincial/territorial public school with the federal government paying the tuition fee charged to non-resident pupils. Information about the proportion of age-eligible children who attend kindergarten is not available.

61. There are also two Canada-wide, federally-funded Aboriginal Head Start programs, one for children living on reserve and the other for children living in urban and northern communities. In 2001, the First Nations Head Start program for children on reserve served approximately 7,000 children across Canada. In the same year, the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities served approximately 3,500 children, an estimated 7% of the age-eligible Aboriginal children not living on reserve.

Child care

62. The federal government funds child care for children living on reserve or in Inuit communities across the whole of Canada. While there has been a substantial expansion of child care spaces specifically for Aboriginal children during the last decade, a survey conducted in 2001/02 found that 66% of the First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative centres had "long waiting lists" (Human Resources Development Canada/Health Canada/Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002).

Table 15 - Access to Aboriginal ECEC services, 2001

Program	Availability
First Nations/ Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)	Approximately 7,000 child care spaces across 390 First Nation and Inuit communities. In collaboration with First Nations Head Start FNICCI funds 14,237 spaces.
Child Day Care Program (Alberta)	1,069 spaces across 22 licensed centres.
Child Day Care Program (Ontario)	2,756 spaces across 86 licensed centres
Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities	In 2001, served approximately 3,500 children living off reserve (roughly 7% of the total number of age-eligible Aboriginal children living off reserve)
First Nations Head Start	Can serve approximately 7,000 children in 168 individual projects across 305 communities.
First Nations junior kindergarten and kindergarten	In 2001/02, served 13,409 children in 387 on-reserve elementary schools.

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

63. Using direct funding, the federal government has supported a substantial increase in ECEC services for Aboriginal children over the past decade. In October 2002, the federal government announced a funding allocation of $320 million over five years for early child development programs for First Nations and other Aboriginal children. Subsequently, in February, 2003, it announced an additional $35 million over five years for early learning and child care programs for First Nations children, primarily those living on reserve. The picture is a complicated one, both from a funding and from a regulatory point of view.

64. The Government of Canada's First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative has funded the expansion of child care programs on reserves and in northern and Inuit communities right across Canada. First Nations child care is supported in Alberta and Ontario through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. In addition, through Health Canada, the federal government funds Head Start programs both on reserve and off reserve. These services, usually managed by Aboriginal community groups or First Nations' governments, typically serve children age 3–5 and generally operate on a part-time basis three or four days a week. While child care and Head Start programs for Aboriginal children are found in all provinces/territories, they may be regulated by provincial/territorial child care authorities if invited on-reserve by reserve authorities, or may be regulated by the First Nation itself, to a comparable level.

6. Research and Monitoring

65. A major source of information at a pan-Canadian level is Statistics Canada. It has a legislated mandate to collect, compile, analyze, abstract and publish statistical information on a range of topics including social and economic activities for Canada as a whole and for each of the provinces and territories. The data produced by Statistics Canada is available at a number of different geographic levels including national, provincial/territorial and community. In additional to being responsible for conducting a Census every five years, the Agency has over 350 active surveys on all aspects of Canadian life. Other data regularly collected by Statistics Canada include the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) and the *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics* (SLID).

66. The *Understanding the Early Years* (UEY) study conducted by Human Resources Development (Department of Social Development) Canada is also a source of information about children. This is a five-year study currently being conducted in 12 communities across Canada to explore how early childhood development is influenced by neighbourhood characteristics, families, schools, child care facilities and the availability of community resources such as public libraries. UEY is using the NLSCY instruments and the *Early Development Instrument* (EDI) developed at McMaster University. The EDI questionnaire, completed by all kindergarten teachers in the study communities, provides aggregate school readiness information on kindergarten children in the designated community. UEY also does community mapping to identify the programs and services for young children available in the community. Finally, it gives them research evidence on the relationship between characteristics of their community and child development outcomes (Social Development Canada, 2003). This has generated some impressive information about social circumstances and their effect on children, but unfortunately the study is retrospective for children under five; as the study begins with interviews with kindergarten teachers about school readiness. The methodology is not intended to measure the impact of ECEC services and cannot be used to satisfactorily do so.

67. Few other major studies on various aspects of ECEC have been undertaken. The 1988 *National Child Care Study* was one of the first studies related to ECEC services funded by the federal government and is the only pan-Canadian study on parents who use child care. Although there is no intention to replicate it, it has provided substantial data on the characteristics of parent-users of child care, their preferences and needs, and patterns of child care arrangements (Lero, Pence, Shields, Brockman, and Goelman, 1992). There is no *regular* collection of national data by the federal government or others about the use and characteristics of kindergarten, nursery schools, regulated child care or family resource programs, or about the children and families using them. Nor are national data collected on the demand or need for ECEC services (Cleveland, Colley, Friendly and Lero, 2003).

68. However some national initiatives and studies have seen the day. Since the early 1990s, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto has received a grant from the Government of Canada to synthesize the available administrative ECEC data from the provinces and territories and to use it to produce periodic national reports. Over the years, these periodic reports have moved from solely covering regulated child care to include data collected from federal and provincial/territorial sources about federal programs and kindergarten (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 1992; 1994; 1997; 2000; Friendly at al., 2002). Reviewing the series of reports enables tracking of changes in government policies, practices and funding.

69. A national human resource study of child care in Canada (the Child Care Sector Study) was funded by Human Resources Development Canada and conducted in the late 1990s (Beach, Bertrand, and Cleveland, 1998). This study examined data on a number of human resource issues such as wages and working conditions, training opportunities, career trends, and workforce morale. One outcome of the study has been the establishment of the Child Care Human Resources Round Table (CCHRRT), a 15-member, formalized mechanism through which child care organizations, labour organizations the child care workforce address human resource issues through sectoral perspectives and analyses. The CCHRRT recently became a formal sector council - a permanent organization with representatives from the workforce, employers, and the labour movement - which is funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to examine child care human resource issues.

70. In parallel, a number of interesting evaluative and modelling studies across jurisdictions have also been undertaken. In the *You Bet I Care!* study (Doherty *et al*., 2000b) replicated – across seven provinces - a previous (1991) national study of wages and working conditions in child care centres, the characteristics and education levels of early childhood educators working in them, staff morale, parent fees and turnover rates. Phase three of *You Bet I Care!* collected data from 231 regulated family child care providers, using observational tools to obtain a quality rating in each home. By combining quality ratings with data about the individual providers, the researchers were able to identify a quality baseline

and discover certain predictors of quality in family child care. (Doherty *et al*., 2000a). Other subsidiary studies of quality based on this data have since been generated. There has also been a series of studies exploring the economics of ECEC services, including a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of possible Canadian investment, which is often cited in international studies (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998).There have also been studies on disability (Irwin *et al*., 2000) and the impact of unionization on the quality of services. (Doherty, 2002). A difficulty, however, of much of this evaluative research has been that funding programs have not been stable or consistent. In sum, according to many researchers, ECEC policy decisions in Canada are not yet fully evidence based, and are too often subject to party political preference, regardless of the number of women working or the best interests of young children.

71. The provinces and territories also collect considerable amounts of administrative data, e.g. both British Columbia and Saskatchewan have carried out needs and preferences surveys. The data, however, are often not comparable across jurisdictions. Nor is there a common agreement on what data to collect, in some instances provinces/territories do not collect information that is routinely collected in other jurisdictions. In other cases, the same information is collected across provinces/territories but the methodology used differs and results in data that are not comparable from one jurisdiction to another.

7. Federal/Provincial/Territorial Initiatives

Federal Initiatives

72. Almost all governments in Canada recognize that the lack of coherent ECEC policies across the country is problematic in terms both of system coherence and of parental expectation in a context of increasing work mobility. Thus, although the Canadian constitutional conventions make clear distinctions about the respective roles of the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments, there is a growing recognition of the need for collaborative action. In recent years, there have been several intergovernmental agreements on children in general and on ECEC in particular.

73. The federal/provincial/territorial National Children's Agenda (NCA) was launched in 1997. The NCA is intended to provide a policy framework for intergovernmental initiatives to support young children and their families. It sets out four broad goals: (1) all children should be as physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy as they can be, with strong self-esteem, coping skills and enthusiasm; (2) all children will have their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and transportation met and will be protected from abuse, neglect, discrimination, exploitation and danger; (3) all children should have opportunities to reach their potential for good physical and social development, language skills, numeracy and general knowledge; and (4) all children should be helped to engage with others, to respect themselves and others, and to develop an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a wider society.

74. Thanks to the experience of working together to promote the NCA, all the Canadian provinces and territories, excepting Québec[16], were able to forge a new agreement, in September 2000 that focussed on Canada's young children: the *Early Childhood Development Agreement* (ECD Agreement). Through it, federal funding of $2.2 billion over five years was initially provided – reaching an annual on-going budget of $500 million in 2003/04 - to be transferred to the provinces to invest in the following areas:

- Healthy pregnancy and infancy
- Parenting and family supports

16. The Government of Quebec supports the general principles of the Early Childhood Development Agreement and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, but did not participate in developing these initiatives because it intends to preserve its sole responsibility on social matters. However, Quebec receives its share of federal funding for these initiatives. References to provincial and territorial governments in the context of these initiatives do not include the Government of Québec.

- Early childhood development, learning and care
- Community supports

75. The initiative is jointly implemented at the federal level by Social Development Canada and Health Canada, which have a general oversight of the agreement. The broad aims of the Agreement have been translated at the provincial/territorial level into a wide variety of health, education, and social welfare programs. The areas in which these funds have been spent include home visiting, pre-kindergarten for children deemed at risk for developmental problems, parenting and literacy programs and prenatal benefits and supports and some child care.

76. In order to strengthen the strand: early childhood development, learning and care, a complementary agreement – *The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care* - was reached in March 2003. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups at national and provincial level have lobbied to influence the conceptualization and implementation of such programs, and to argue that they should be more ECEC focused. The vitality of stakeholder groups is a particular feature of Canadian ECEC services, both at federal and at provincial/territorial level. Through the new agreement, a more direct focus and additional investments in the specific area of early learning and child care would be made. The text of the *Framework* states that:

> *Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services recognize that quality early learning and child care programs play an important role in promoting the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children.*

The objective is "to make further investments in the promotion of early childhood development and the support of parental workforce participation or employment training." The federal government has undertaken to transfer a total of $900 million to the provinces and territories over a five-year period to improve access to affordable, quality, provincially/territorially regulated programs (Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, 2003). As announced in the federal Budget of March 2004, this investment will increase to a total of $1.050 billion over five years.

CHST Funding for Early Childhood Development

77. In 1995, there was a reduction in the amount of federal transfer payments to the provinces and territories for health, post-secondary education and social services. At the same time, federal funding for these programs was collapsed into a single block grant, the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) which replaced the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) under which the federal government reimbursed the provinces/territories for up to 50% of their expenditures on programs intended to ameliorate or prevent poverty. Since the introduction of the CHST, the federal government has introduced two federal/provincial/territorial pertinent to ECEC. These agreements were signed, one in 2000 and the other in 2003. The 2000 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement provides the provinces and territories with federal funds to be used to improve and expand services and supports for children under age six and their families that: (1) promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; (2) improve parenting and family supports; (3) strengthen early childhood development, learning and care; and (4) strengthen community supports. The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, signed in March, 2003, involves the transfer of federal funds directly to childcare in the Canadian Provinces. These amounts, earmarked for early childhood development by the Government of Canada and transferred through the Canada Health and Social Transfer, are outlined below in Table 16, while Table 17 provides the additional amounts earmarked for Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care:

Table 16 - CHST/CST transfers for early childhood development to provinces/territories in $ millions[1]

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	TOTAL
Newfoundland & Labrador	5.1	6.6	8.2	8.1	8.1	**36.1**
Prince Edward Island	1.3	1.7	2.2	2.2	2.2	**9.6**
Nova Scotia	9.0	11.9	14.8	14.7	14.6	**65.1**
New Brunswick	7.3	9.6	11.9	11.8	11.7	**52.2**
Quebec	71.6	95.0	118.4	118.0	117.7	**520.7**
Ontario	115.0	154.2	193.4	194.1	194.8	**851.4**
Manitoba	11.1	14.7	18.4	18.3	18.3	**80.9**
Saskatchewan	9.7	12.7	15.7	15.6	15.4	**69.2**
Alberta	29.6	39.7	49.8	50.0	50.2	**219.4**
British Columbia	39.4	52.5	65.6	65.5	65.4	**288.4**
Yukon	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	**2.1**
Northwest Territories	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	**2.9**
Nunavut	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	**2.2**
TOTAL	**300.0**	**400.0**	**500.0**	**500.0**	**500.0**	**2,200.0**

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.
1. Figures are based on Statistics Canada population estimates for 2003-04 and Finance Canada population projections for 2004-05 to 2007-08. As the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) is allocated on a per capita basis, all figures are subject to revision through the regular CHST estimation process as new population figures become available.

78. In the absence of more directive federal funding or guidelines, much rests on provincial initiatives as to how these funds are spent. In this section we comment on each of the four provinces we visited, and their attempts to provide coherent ECEC services. They have each arrived at different solutions to the issues we have raised.

Table 17 - CHST/CST transfers for early learning and child care to provinces and territories in $ millions

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	TOTAL
Newfoundland & Labrador	0.4	2.4	3.6	4.8	5.5	**16.8**
Prince Edward Island	0.1	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.5	**4.5**
Nova Scotia	0.7	4.4	6.6	8.7	10.1	**30.5**
New Brunswick	0.6	3.5	5.3	6.9	8.0	**24.4**
Quebec	5.9	35.4	52.9	70.4	81.9	**246.5**
Ontario	9.7	58.2	87.6	117.3	137.3	**410.1**
Manitoba	0.9	5.5	8.2	10.9	12.7	**38.3**
Saskatchewan	0.8	4.7	6.9	9.2	10.6	**32.2**
Alberta	2.5	15.0	22.6	30.3	35.5	**105.8**
British Columbia	3.3	19.6	29.4	39.2	45.7	**137.2**
Yukon	0.02	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	**1.1**
Northwest Territories	0.03	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	**1.4**
Nunavut	0.02	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	**1.0**
TOTAL	**25.0**	**150.0**	**225.0**	**300.0**	**350.0**	**1,050.0**

8. Initiatives in four Provinces

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (PEI)

79. PEI is a small maritime province on the east coast of Canada. Its population is 135,294. The majority, 56%, live in rural areas. The main industries are agriculture (its potato industry is known world-wide) and tourism. The Aboriginal population is very small: there are only two First Nations Head Start programs serving 27 children, and one on-reserve kindergarten program. Like the other Atlantic Provinces, PEI is small and relatively poor, and has a limited tax basis for funding ECEC initiatives. It seemed to the OECD review team that if there is to be a Pan-Canadian approach to early childhood funding, then policy should take account of the relative resources of the provinces and their capacity to fund high quality services.

80. Services in PEI are particularly well co-ordinated. There is a coherent strategy at political and administrative levels, and clear lines of accountability and reporting. This is probably made easier by the small size of PEI, and its long-standing traditions of friendly co-operation. However, political and administrative leadership and ongoing consultation have obviously played an important role in generating a unified vision of early childhood education and care policy. In 1999 the provincial government announced its intention to develop a five-year strategy to support the growth and development of *all* children in the province, under the banner of "*The Healthy Child Development Strategy."* There was widespread consultation before this document was produced.

81. The organization of early childhood policy and provision operates at three levels:

- *The Premier's Council*, a group of community representatives who advise the premier on issues related to young children;
- *The Children's Secretariat* made up of representatives from five provincial government departments who work together to implement the strategy and monitor its progress and crucially to agree on sharing funds;
- *The Children's Working Group*, an inter-sectoral group including community child care representatives and members of the Secretariat.

82. Prince Edward Island has been particularly innovative concerning kindergarten provision. While community-based early childhood education centres have provided kindergarten programs since the mid 1970s, parents were responsible for the cost. In 1999, the Government of Prince Edward Island announced universal funding for a three hour core kindergarten program which would continue to be available through the early childhood system. The Departments of Education and Health and Social Services share responsibility for kindergarten. Approximately 50% of the kindergarten programs are offered as part of full day ECEC programs, providing a seamless day for children, and supporting parents in their work and family responsibilities. "Kindergarten mentors" visit the programs and provide on site consultation. Unlike other provinces, the staff are not required to be teachers in order to deliver the program - rather, kindergarten teachers are early childhood educators with a minimum of a post-secondary diploma. It seemed to the review team that weaknesses in recruitment requirements (linked probably to wage levels) and the limited duration of in-service training may be impacting negatively on the quality of programs offered to children.

Box 1 - For Our Children

PEI Healthy Child Development Strategy and the Children's Working Group

Prince Edward Island's Healthy Child Development Strategy is a multi-year initiative focused on children from prenatal to early school years. It integrates the vision, values and goals of the National Children's Agenda and Canada's Early Childhood Development Initiative with the expressed hopes and aspirations of Islanders for their children.

In an open and collaborative process, government and community partners worked together to develop the strategic directions and specific objectives to reach the goals of good health, safety and security, success at learning, and social engagement. PEI's Strategy is grounded in the belief that all Islanders share responsibility for children, and Government's role is to provide leadership in facilitating community action. Guiding principles for the strategy emphasize the need to involve parents, families, business, community, academia and government.

The Strategy is grounded in evidence about what works for children – and stresses the need to develop and monitor indicators of child development in order to continually measure progress. Program and process evaluation activities are supported, and carried out in partnership with the research community. Data sources such as Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth provide comparative national outcome measures for further provincial analysis.

The integrated nature of the Strategy is evident in the key areas of action and in the governance structure for implementation. Key areas of action recognize the broad range of influences on child development, including pregnancy, birth and infancy, early childhood education and care, children with exceptional needs, parent support, childhood injury, children's mental health, family literacy, environment, screening and assessment, protecting children, and healthy lifestyles. The Strategy's enabling conditions, e.g., healthy public policy, family income, and community support underline the important influence of social indicators with healthy child development. This type of framework supports the multi-faceted nature of Early Childhood Education and Care, and provides for a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives impacting all aspects of provision of quality programs.

PEI's Government considers healthy child development to be a provincial priority. Government has established a Children's Secretariat with staff from five different government ministries in order to promote a comprehensive approach to the implementation of this Strategy. The Secretariat supports the Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development, which is an advisory body to the Premier on issues affecting children. The Children's Secretariat also represents government as part of the Children's Working Group – a broad inter-sectoral group involving representatives of networks of early childhood educators, community organizations, research, police, federal government, and Acadian and Francophone communities. This "network of networks" ensures that all key areas of action are mutually supportive, and remain focused on the whole child. According to the knowledge of the Review Team, this kind of networking can be very beneficial in the use of resources.

The Children's Working Group collaborates in preparing an annual Action Plan, which identifies priorities for funding and policy development. Both government and community prepare responses to the Action Plan, resulting in significant partnership based initiatives. Funding is available for the community networks to facilitate activities in support of children and families, and to provide resources for an annual public education campaign coordinated by the community partners.

Although the key areas may appear to be distinct, they are meant to be interconnected and support each other. Therefore, the different aspects of the recommended actions should not be isolated as all activities represent a systematic and comprehensive approach to the PEI Healthy Child Development Strategy. The review team found the PEI Healthy Child Development Strategy a very positive example of a well functioning network of expertise and services. Through the strategy, different networks have supported each others work in developing ECEC quality. The strategy can work as a springboard to a more coherent ECEC system in PEI.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

83. British Columbia is Canada's western-most province. Most of the 4 million population is concentrated in Vancouver or neighbouring suburban areas. Forestry, mining, fishing and agriculture – including wine production - are important industries, but there is also strong growth in eco-tourism and film production. The enviable climate and dramatic setting of sea and mountain attracts many immigrants and visitors, but the cost of living is higher than elsewhere in Canada. Approximately 35,000 immigrants arrive each year. Besides English, the commonest languages are Chinese, Punjabi, German, French, Dutch, Italian, Tagalog, Spanish and Japanese. There are also 197 First Nation Bands, and a small Metis population - approximately 40,000 Aboriginal children altogether.

84. ECEC services for young children in British Columbia have been reviewed recently by the new government, which assumed power in 2001. Overall, there appears to be a lack of clarity about policy, strategies and implementation. In comparison to PEI, we witnessed little co-ordination between the people responsible for the many different aspects of ECEC services, with education acting seemingly in isolation from other services. The team was informed of several services in place responding to parenting or family or dysfunction, but received the impression that the concept of an early childhood service as the basic family support system and preventive tool, had not yet been envisaged. Response to crisis seemed to dominate over long-term planning, giving rise to concern about the conceptual framing and sustainability of services. The 2001/2002 *Annual Report on Early Childhood Development Activities* listed a series of projects, each of which has *different* lines of accountability and Ministerial representation, with no suggestions about how they might be co-ordinated.

85. If the review team was uneasy about the lack of co-ordination across services; the concern were voiced still more strongly by the stakeholders. The Provincial Child Care Council, set up to advise Ministers, gave us a carefully presented critique of early childhood policies in the province, stressing the poor flow of information across the sectors, the lack of policy co-ordination and the volatility of policy directions as administrations change. The question was raised that if research is increasingly able to identify what works best for children and families, why cannot policy stability and continuity *based on evidence* be possible for the Province?

86. The Council also criticized current funding policies, for instance, BC now has by far the lowest proportion of parent fee subsidy of any province, although rates of child poverty are comparable with those of Canada as a whole (see tables 4, 14). On the other hand, the various administrations (as no one ministry has the lead responsibility for ECEC) assured the team that there have been no cutbacks, but rather shifts in funding allocations made in response to the urgent needs of certain groups, e.g. special needs funding in BC, for example, is high compared to other provinces, as is also expenditure on operating grants to child care centres. These aspects are indeed very positive, but rightly or wrongly, the team was concerned in British Columbia by the apparent lack of co-ordination, by a failure to establish early childhood education and care as *the* mainstream service for children and families (through which special needs and vulnerable children could be served in an inclusive way), and the fragmentation of a relatively small budget among so many different groups and services.

87. Despite such concerns, British Columbia has some outstanding models of early education and care. Some of the best provision the team encountered - responsive to diversity, inclusive, offering imaginative activities, and grounded in the local community - was located in Vancouver and its suburbs (see Box 2 below). The Province is also fortunate to have several researchers with international reputations involved in ECEC initiatives. These are strong resources on which to build, and represent in the Province a considerable legacy of personal commitment to young children and their well-being. With greater attention to these resources, authentic consultation with the stakeholders, improved investment and coherent planning (perhaps under one agency or secretariat with sufficient human and financial resources, responsible for *all* early childhood education and care), early childhood policy in British Columbia can move forward.

Box 2 - Langara Child Development Centre

Langara Child Development Centre is an ancillary service to Student and Educational Support Services at Langara College and it comes under the responsibility of the Dean. It caters for 62 children aged 18 months to 5 years. The programs for children 3-5 years are open from 8.00 to 17.45, and the toddler program from 8.30 to 16.30. The centre is inclusive and welcomes children in need of extra support, for instance with exceptional health care needs. It is used by children from many backgrounds, whose mothers or fathers attend the college. The centre building continues to be funded by the college, and most students fees are subsidized through provincial subsidies. It also provides some places for children of non-students from the local community.

Langara is a purpose-built, imaginatively designed centre, with indoor and outdoor spaces that flow into one another, and enable children to work in small groups or to mix together across age groups inside and out. The indoor spaces are light and spacious and uncluttered. There are many workstations offering children a considerable variety of opportunities to be creative and make their own constructions or designs or engage in imaginative play; or if they chose, just to sit and watch or to have a quiet time with a member of staff. The kitchen is used for meal preparations but is also used as a pedagogical resource for the children who can cook and bake.

The outdoor space is particularly spacious and well designed, with a variety of natural surfaces. It is subdivided by raised flower beds, with a profusion of scented and brightly coloured flowers, often planted by an enthusiastic gardening teacher and the children. There are shaded and non-shaded areas, and imaginative sand and water areas. Above all, there is play equipment that stretches children physically and requires them to exercise their physical skills and their judgement of distance, weight and motion to the full - for instance a tire swing around a pole; and challenging climbing equipment with various entry and exit points. There are also workstations outdoors – for instance we saw a small group of children busily chalking designs on a path; others creating a farm on a bench and table; and yet others dancing and pattern making with scarves. Children can move freely around these outdoor areas. The children gave the impression of being purposefully occupied. They were absorbed in whatever they were doing, often energetically and at the same time, helpful to children with special needs. Adults rarely directed or interfered in activities but stood unobtrusively by as a resource for children who needed or requested assistance.

Underlying the use of indoor and outside space was a clear pedagogy. At the centre of this pedagogy was a view of young children as autonomous, playful, resourceful and creative. Children were seen as likely to develop and elaborate their ideas and games with one another as with an adult. The job of the staff was to create a stimulating resource-rich environment that enabled children to exploit their friendships, energies, interests and playfulness to the full. This approach requires continuous, but unobtrusive, observation of the children and ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of the activities that are offered, as well as the development of new projects. The Director of the Centre was well-trained and qualified to post degree level, and had developed a team work approach where each member of staff was in turn encouraged to use her talents and abilities to support the children. Staff appeared as engaged as the children. They saw their work collectively as creating a harmonious environment. They in turn provided playful and inventive responses to the shifting foci of the children's interests. They enabled and backed up the work of small groups of children engaged in particular projects.

Many other departments in the college use the centre as an opportunity for learning. Students in college programs such as Nutrition and Food Service Management, Human Performance and Recreation, Nursing, Psychology, Photography and Journalism spend time observing or interacting with staff and children in ways appropriate to their areas of study.

SASKATCHEWAN

88. Saskatchewan lies in the heart of Canada. It has a population of approximately 1 million. It is prairie country and the Province produces half the wheat grown in Canada. Although more than one third of the population live in the two largest cities (Regina and Saskatoon), the remainder are widely dispersed throughout the province with almost half the population living in communities of less than 5000 people.

89. Although starting from a very low base in child care, ECEC policy seems dynamic and well-led in the Province. After extensive consultation of stakeholders, Saskatchewan adopted an *Action Plan for Children* in 1993. The key focus of this action plan is prevention, early intervention and support to vulnerable children. One of the outstanding support projects we saw during our Canadian visit provided support to young school-going mothers and their infants.

Box 3 - Mackenzie Infant Centre

This project, is aimed at teenage mothers and their babies and is linked to a special tutorial unit in the neighbouring high school. It was established in a house opposite the school in 1986, but now has a second location at the school itself. Each setting has the capacity to care for 12 infants per day. Overall there are 30 infants enrolled, providing child care during school hours whilst the mothers continue their studies. Mackenzie Infant Centre is funded by a provincial grant, and also undertakes some local fundraising.

The child's hours of attendance are carefully dovetailed with those of the special teaching unit. This unit enables the mothers to have tailor-made teaching in order to complete grade 12. There are 4 teaching sessions a day, one of which is usually a homework session. Pregnant girls, where possible with the fathers, are encouraged to attend pre-natal classes in the unit. Staff informed us that "Pregnancy is a window of opportunity; the girls become more future focused." A social worker is attached to the centre, to follow up the most vulnerable mothers and ensure they access benefits and housing support.

The centre provides an atmosphere that is calm, welcoming and clean. The environment is deliberately uncluttered, and the babies were allowed as much freedom of movement as possible. They are not over-stimulated, but given natural objects (as opposed to plastic manufactured toys) to explore with their hands and mouths, in their own time and at their own rate. Each child's characteristics are carefully noted, and appropriate responses are worked out. For instance we saw a sobbing toddler who, the staff told us, would reject cuddling or attention but just needed space to get over her particular upset. Given the time she needed, we saw her get up and join in again with activities, traces of her distress now gone.

The educators also work closely with the vulnerable young mothers. Each mother is assigned a worker, who remains with her and her child throughout. Each mother is visited at home before her child came to the centre, and encouraged to spend some time at the centre with her child. The Director of the Infant Centre, with a degree in psychology, had specialized in counselling. In common with the other outstanding examples of practice that we saw, she had an explicit and well-developed pedagogical vision. She had been impressed with the well-known ideas of educators from Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, and had attempted to apply them to her particular setting. "Here we try to concentrate on relationships, on what we doing with the children and with one another." The job of the educator was to try to interpret and respond to the infant's tentative attempts to explore his or her immediate environment. The staffroom contained many psychology and curriculum books, in particular about the Reggio Emilia approach, which were read and discussed by the staff.

Despite the quality of this specialized work, the salary of the Director was less than the starting salary of an ordinary teacher. Because the infant centre mirrored school hours, it was closed in the holidays. Staff were on term contracts only, and laid off over the summer, when they had to collect unemployment benefit – a demeaning way to treat dedicated staff.

90. Aboriginal children constitute approximately one third of all children under 6 years in the Province. This proportion will most likely increase, as the Aboriginal birth rate is significantly higher than the Canadian average. There are approximately 45 on-reserve child care centres; 74 First Nations Head Start, and 16 Aboriginal Head Start in urban and Northern Communities funded by the Government of Canada in Saskatchewan. Children living on reserve may attend kindergarten on reserve or off reserve.

91. Services for on-reserve First Nations people are funded by the federal government. The Province funds services for all off-reserve residents in Saskatchewan, whether they are Aboriginal or not. This separation in funding responsibility between the two levels of government inevitably creates problems for the effective integration of ECEC services, not just in Saskatchewan, but across the all provinces/territories. The legitimate desire of First Nations communities for self-government adds an additional dimension to the challenge of effective planning and delivery of ECEC services. Some attempt is made to address the problem through periodic discussions between federal and provincial officials as well as with Aboriginal representatives. At the community level, there is also a degree of co-operation that occurs between service providers since both the federal and provincial governments are heavily dependent on local communities to deliver services

92. These funding and administrative arrangements raise many questions for ECEC in Saskatchewan. Because of the split in responsibility and the growing Aboriginal child population in the reserves, how will a *modus vivendi* with Saskatchewan mainstream life and economy be forged for these far-away children? Canadian scholars and practitioners are attempting to bring answers to this centuries' old issue, and one of the paradigm shifts coming from their research is to emphasize genuine partnership with the First Nations. Already, many First Nation communities are seizing the initiative through Tribal Councils. Because of its population mix, Saskatchewan should be at the cutting edge of provision for Aboriginal children, but its responsibility in the context of many uncoordinated federal initiatives seems unclear.

93. From the perspective of the review team, the challenge of forging an inclusive society may be even more acute for the Aboriginal families and children living off-reserve. Many of these children do not have the opportunity to participate in ECEC programming and though living in urban areas, their participation in Saskatchewan society seemed marginal. Official juvenile justice reports record an unacceptably high proportion of Aboriginal adolescents who find themselves in trouble with the law and are engaged in asocial and petty criminal activities. How can services be organised for children and youth that promote social and economic inclusion while respecting the culture embodied in family life and tradition? Here again the question of participation would seem to be crucial – an approach practised in the Regina Early Learning Centre:

Box 4 - Regina Early Learning Centre

The Early Learning Centre in Regina offers a variety of programs for low income families with children from birth to five. These include: Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program, KidsFirst Program, Family Outreach and a Preschool Program for 3-5 year olds. The centre works co-operatively with parents and provides programs that foster the healthy development of children. It is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting mainly of parents. Many of the children are First Nations or Metis and this is reflected in the composition of the Board on which a majority of Aboriginal parents serve.

All the staff in the different programs are well-qualified. In the pre-school program, one of the four teachers and three of the four assistants are First Nations or Metis. Teachers in the pre-school program have certificates or degrees in Education. Ongoing in-service training and reflection among staff is seen as important in maintaining quality in the programs.

The Preschool Program

The review team were impressed by the quality of the pre-school program. It is a half-day program from Monday to Thursday. Fridays are reserved for various staff and parent development programs, special events and for home visits. There are 96 children enrolled, in morning or afternoon sessions. The Preschool operates during the school year of the Regina Public School System.

One of the basic principles in the preschool is to work in partnership with parents. Staff approach the parents with mutuality and respect, and together, they seek to support the children in their well-being, development and learning. One aspect of respect is to look for the strengths within the cultural groups using or working in the centre. The pre-school curriculum reflects traditional cultural activities and perspectives, for instance in the stress on artwork, and respect for the environment. The team was informed that children also take part in multicultural activities such as music, language, dance and food preparation. The First Nations and Metis staff provide the children with strong and positive role models.

Although the premises were not designed as a preschool environment, by using their imagination and creativity the staff have made the centre both aesthetic and functional. The preschool is divided into four classrooms, each of which is used for two part time groups daily. These classrooms are colour coded green, blue, red and yellow. Each classroom has 6-7 different

learning areas. These include a science table with lots of natural objects – stones, feathers, shells, and insects; a mime and dressing up area; areas for gross motor activities, and many opportunities for arts and craft. Throughout the centre, the team found well-displayed traces of the children's project and art work (no cartoon figures coloured in!). Books were an important resource and were well used. Children were not limited to one room, but could go to other rooms to work or play if they wished. The staff had created a visiting cards system to keep an unobtrusive eye on where children were going.

In each of the classrooms the Review Team could see children following their interest, working and playing in small groups and being actively involved. There were real tools for children to use. We saw one boy 'repairing' an oven with a hammer in a very concentrated way. There was another group of children examining spiders with a magnifying glass. We also saw the teachers encouraging children to take initiatives and to collaborate with each other. The children were not cosseted, but given genuine freedom to choose. Through dialogue with their teachers, these choices are then transformed into purposeful activities.

Like the other examples of good practice that we saw, there was a very dedicated director, who put considerable emphasis on in-service training, staff discussion and reflection time. The staff team set themselves goals, which are continually reviewed in the light of practice. The whole staff group meet monthly, with team meetings in between. They also have supper meetings, and have invited speakers. One notable innovation is the provision of a "year book" for each child, photos of the children alongside a record of their pictures and drawings and attempts at writing, interspersed with comments from teachers, all beautifully mounted in an album as a record of progress that parents could treasure. The Review Team were much impressed by this effective, yet non-judgmental means of evaluation, and appreciated the enormous work undertaken by the teachers to make such records possible. The atmosphere in the preschool was warm and we felt a sense of community. Some of the staff had stayed in the preschool for many years, a fact that speaks for itself.

94. Co-ordination of policies and services is an important facet of the Saskatchewan *Action Plan*. The Human Services Integration Forum brings together seven provincial government departments and an Executive Council to oversee initiatives. A major undertaking of the forum is the Schools Plus program, which is seeking to make schools more flexible and community based. It is clearly an important initiative and one which will provide a lead in the future.

95. However, Saskatchewan is starting from a very low base of child care – reaching only 5.4% of the population. Although there has been an effort to subsidize centres directly and to offer reasonable levels of subsidies to parents, there is very little regulated child care provision. The focus on early intervention reaches relatively few children. This seems to be a real gap, not just in terms of provision but also in terms of prevention. Effective outreach to vulnerable families can be practised more discreetly and with less stigma from a universal child care service than from crisis-led programs.

MANITOBA

96. Manitoba is the easternmost of the three Prairie Provinces. It has a population of just over a million, half of whom live in Winnipeg. Agriculture is a mainstay of the local economy, but there is also an industrial sector. The original European settlers were Scottish, followed by Russians, Ukrainians and Germans. In the later half of the 20th century there were more non-European immigrants. Some of the languages spoken in addition to English and French are Cree, Chinese, Tagalog, Polish, Ukrainian, Portuguese and Punjabi. There are 62 First Nation Bands. There are 62 on reserve child care centres; 18 sites for Aboriginal Head Start in urban and Northern Communities, and 20 First Nations Head Start funded by the Government of Canada in Manitoba.

97. Manitoba has made strenuous efforts in recent years to develop and co-ordinate child, youth and family services across the province. A centrepiece of that endeavour has been the Healthy Child initiative, a child-centred framework founded on the concepts of social inclusion and the integration of economic justice and social justice for all families. The mechanism to advance the integration of these pillars of justice is Manitoba's Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Established in March 2000, the Cabinet Committee comprises the Ministers of eight government departments: Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; Culture, Heritage and Tourism; Education, Citizenship and Youth; Family Services and Housing; Health; Healthy Living; Justice; and the Status of Women. Manitoba's Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet is the only standing Cabinet committee in Canada dedicated to the well-being of children, youth and families. Its creation signalled that children are a top policy priority in Manitoba.

Box 5 - Healthy Child Manitoba

Concurrent with the creation of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet was the establishment of the Healthy Child Manitoba Office. Under the direction of the inter-departmental cabinet committee and a corresponding Deputy Minister Committee, Healthy Child Manitoba implements Manitoba's child-centred policy within and across government through two major activities: program development and implementation; and policy development, research and implementation. Healthy Child Manitoba's vision is to achieve the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children. Its mission is to facilitate a community development approach for children's well-being, with an emphasis on developing programs that are community-based, inclusive and supported by sound research.

In recognition of the critical period of the early years in the life of a child, the priority focus of Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and the Healthy Child Manitoba Office is on conception through infancy and the preschool years. This commitment to early childhood development is demonstrated in Manitoba's increased investment in this area (over $50 million dollars in new funding for ECD since April 2000) and the formulation of *Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Child Care.* While the government prioritizes investment in the early years, it also recognizes that this is not solely a governmental responsibility. Partnerships have been formed with multiple non-profit agencies to assist in providing a continuum of programs and services to improve outcomes for children and families. The cornerstone of the policy will be to build a universal, accessible, affordable and high quality child care system.

Another dimension of Manitoba's policy approach to ECD is the *Healthy Baby Program*. Healthy Baby is a two-part program that includes the first prenatal financial benefit in Canada, paired with community support programs that offer nutrition and health education and emotional support to pregnant women and new mothers. Community supports to families with children in their early years are also provided through integrated provincial home visiting programs. Delivered through the public health system, community-based intervention is provided by paraprofessional mentors to families identified in need of significant parenting support.

Other components of Manitoba's early childhood continuum include: programs planned locally by parent-child coalitions in regions and communities; a strategy of programs and services to prevent foetal alcohol spectrum disorder; early childhood health promotion programs; supports for children with developmental and/or physical disabilities; school division-sponsored inter-sectoral preschool initiatives; and the restoration of federal funding to families with children who are receiving social assistance benefits.

Manitoba continues to act on its commitment by building on successes and creating new initiatives to support the early years. This commitment is fostered on the belief that every child deserves the same opportunities for growing up healthy and happy and that every adult shares in the responsibility to give each child the best future possible.

98. In support of this new vision for child care in the Province, the Ministry of Family Services and Housing solicited public debate and opinion in February 2001. This vision was called *A Vision for Child Care and Development in Manitoba* and was a collaborative effort developed by the Child Day Care Regulatory Review Committee, whose membership includes parents, child care providers, training institutions, social service organizations and government. The vision focused on four key elements – universality, accessibility, affordability and quality in six component areas: Standards/Quality Care; Funding; Training and Professionalism; Governance; Integrated Service Delivery; and Public Education. In April 2002, the government announced *Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Child Care* which clearly articulated goals for child care.

99. At the same time, the government developed *The K to Senior 4 Agenda* which outlined six priority areas for action as well as a firm statement on the Province's commitment to a public, inclusive education. Schools are encouraged, for example, under the province's Child Care in Schools Policy, to develop partnerships and attach child care centres to schools thereby sharing school resources and improving interchanges with the pre-kindergarten programs.

100. In addition, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) has introduced an Early Childhood Development Initiative Grant. The focus of this grant is to support the implementation of pre-school initiatives that increase the readiness of children (ages 0-5 years) for school entry in partnership with parents, communities, and intersectoral agencies. Additionally, MECY has recently released a new planning document *Towards Inclusion: School Based Planning and Reporting, A Framework for Developing and Implementing Annual School Plans and Reports* that supports partnerships, planning and reporting from the individual student level to the community level. The political sophistication and openness of the province's approaches, and the determined effort to involve the public is very impressive.

101. Despite this turnaround and prioritization, Manitoba has started in fact from a relatively low base. Funding for early childhood development and care has been in short supply, and remains far too low for a rapid and satisfactory implementation of the new vision. In the words of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba's *Blueprint for Action: A Five Year Plan for Child care*, child care in the Province is "severely compromised on three fronts"; the lack of spaces (only 12 children in a 100 have access to a licensed place; lack of affordability; and poor quality of services offered. The review team visited some of the regulated provision which, in general, showed a need for improvement. In addition, the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators and assistants has reached "crisis proportions", according to research by the Manitoba Child Care Association, published in 2001. However, the recommendations put forward to remedy the situation by the Manitoba Child Care Association seem very relevant, not only for Manitoba but for other countries confronted by the same challenge:

Box 6 - Manitoba's early childhood labour market strategy

The Canadian provinces face a serious workforce crisis in the early childhood field. Early childhood educators and child care assistants do not receive sufficient training or command sufficient wages to develop a strongly distinctive profile for the profession. The situation impacts negatively both on the quality of services provided to young children and on their future sustainability. Many services are unable to meet the basic standards required by regulations, not least with regard to the proportion of trained staff who should be present in the various programs offered.

Because of the worsening situation in the Province, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth provided funding to the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA)[17] to research workforce issues and to make recommendations. A series of interviews with stakeholder groups in Manitoba, focus groups, and researchers from other Canadian Provinces and abroad, generated a series of principles to support the recruitment and training of early childhood educators in the child care system. The OECD team considers that these recommendations may be useful for all jurisdictions to consider:

[17]. MCCA is a membership-funded, non-profit association of early childhood workers and associates promoting the interests of young children. Its 2700 members include early childhood educators, child care assistants, family child care providers, boards of directors of child care centres, students, academics and other advocates for children.

1. **Establish a cross-sectoral ECE Recruitment and Retention Committee**. The Committee will utilise demographic data and develop projection models to predict future recruitment needs, and engage with labour market and qualifications agencies to improve both coherence and fairness in this domain;

2. **Establish systems that support progressive qualifications and role progress for early childhood personnel**. Continuing education and specific training models should be integrated into coherent training packages that allow practitioners to work toward recognised diplomas through a variety of flexible training methods, with wage incentives equivalent to the education sector;

3. **Develop a supporting financial incentive system that includes forgivable loans**. A contract model that guarantees free training if a commitment to the field for an agreed period is made by the candidate is an essential component of the recommendations.

4. **Develop a framework of support to early childhood personnel through apprenticeships and mentorships**;

5. **Expand the gap training assessment mode**l, that is, practising CCAs or licensed family child care providers with non-recognised post-secondary credentials may request to be assessed for gaps in their training. Suitable courses should then be supplied, leading eventually to ECE II and ECE III qualifications.

6. **Launch a public education initiative specific to workforce issues**. In this initiative, government should underline especially the value of the profession and the need to have a workforce reflecting the diversity of the child population;

7. **Establish an entry level requirement for the field**;

8. **Explore the feasibility of an ongoing and annual professional development requirement**, with at least 24 hours annually required of ECE IIs and IIIs, and 12 hours required of family child care providers;

9. **Establish a college of early childhood educators in Manitoba** to explore the process of legislative recognition of the early childhood profession.

102. The Manitoba Government supported the development of the Manitoba Child Care Association's (MCCA) Labour Market Strategy and incorporated some of the recommendations into its five-year plan for child care which aims to improve quality as well as affordability and accessibility. Already a public education and student recruitment campaign has attracted more students to the field and innovative training models, including a "workplace model" and competency-based training for currently employed Child Care Assistants (CCAs) are being offered in the Province.

103. In addition, Manitoba is currently exploring a competency-based model of training for family child care home providers and has established a training grant for CCAs and family child care home providers as a first step to providing support to individuals pursuing post-secondary training in early childhood education. Manitoba is also increasing ECE wages by increasing the funding it provides to child care centres and is working toward the Phase IV salary scale recommended by the MCCA, which will offer wage incentives tied to training.

CHAPTER 4

ISSUES FOR ECEC IN CANADA

104. From our brief overview of Federal and Provincial policies in Chapter 3, it is clear that Canada did not make great progress in early education and care during the 1990s. If one excludes Quebec, there has been little growth in early childhood services. Thanks to the work of community groups, supported in some Provinces by the administrations – and to the more recent Federal/Provincial initiative - access has grown slightly, and at too slow a rate to meet demand. An industrialised, service-based economy with between 50 – 60% of its young children in unregulated, unsupervised care has a road to travel to ensure child development on an equitable basis for all its children. As our discussion below will indicate, problems of access to quality services are most severe for children in poverty, and above all, for children from Aboriginal groups.

105. There are, however, positive developments that are important to underline:

- *Enhanced parental leave has been enacted*: Under the federal Employment Insurance Act of 2001, Canadian parents are authorised receive parental leave benefits for up to 35 weeks after the birth or adoption of a child in addition to the 15 weeks already attributed to maternity leave. Provincial and territorial labour legislations have been amended to ensure that parents who are on maternity or parental leave for this period have their jobs protected during the period of their leave. This has been a tremendous breakthrough for Canadian parents and infants, allowing – among eligible groups - parental care of infants during their first year, and reducing pressure on early child care services.
- *The extraordinary advance made by Quebec, which has launched one of the most ambitious and interesting early education and care policies in North America.* By itself, Quebec now accounts for about 40% of regulated child care places in Canada, and has recorded the only significant growth of ECEC services over the past decade. If the political desire exists in English-speaking Canada to improve access and quality in early childhood services, and to move toward a universal system focussing primarily on child development, exchanges with policy planners, administrators and stakeholders in Quebec should prove extremely useful.
- *The effort made by several administrations after 1996, when the CAP ended, to maintain their early childhood services from their own revenue, despite a withdrawal of Federal funding and a climate of suspicion of public services*. Although for various reasons, none of these provinces showed the same clarity of vision as Quebec in addressing the needs of young children and families, several of the administrations with whom the OECD team was in contact had established detailed provincial plans to streamline services and improve their management.
- *Consultation and co-operation between the Federal and Provincial governments has developed*. We have already noted - in the section *Federal/Provincial/Territorial Initiatives* in Chapter 3 - the agreements with regard to the National Children's Agenda, the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Care. Although we were informed that some Provinces did not always channel federal funding toward professional ECEC services in the earlier stages of these agreements, federal funding began to have an impact from 2003/04, and has stimulated further developments in ECEC,
- *The continuing strong contribution made by non-profit, community organisations to regulated early childhood provision, their services now accounting for nearly 80% of subsidised child care provision.* In so far as we could judge from our interviews with the administrations, there exists a real respect for the non-profit community groups and recognition of the

contribution they have made over the past decades. However, unlike in the original Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), the new Agreements no longer restrict subsidies to non-profit bodies, a regulation that played an important role in limiting the spread of commercial child care. We shall comment again on these plans later in the chapter as they seem to us to offer a means of moving forward.

- *Canadian expertise in ECEC research, data collection and information* - The research and data provided by Canadian researchers – and not least by the authors of the *Background Report of Canada* – are of excellent quality. Although we make some suggestions concerning the co-ordination and focusing of Canadian research, it is true to say that evaluations and analyses coming from the major ECEC research groups and universities are both relevant to Canada and increasingly cited at international level, e.g. the McCain/Mustard (1999) Ontario study, the economics research of Cleveland and Krashinsky,[18] various analyses using the data from the NLSCY longitudinal study or the research clearing house provided by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit of the University of Toronto.

106. Despite these encouraging signs, Canada is still at an early stage in the development of professional early childhood services. With this in mind, we shall discuss in some detail in this chapter, issues and opportunities that if resolved, may help future policy-making in both the child care and kindergarten sectors, viz.: financing; the separation of child care from early education; access and equity challenges; quality issues.

Financing

Costs and benefits of child care services in Switzerland – Empirical findings from Zurich, (2001)

A study by the Swiss social economists, Müller-Kucera and Bauer (2001), shows that Zurich's public investment of 18 million SF annually in child care services was offset by at least 29 million SF of additional tax revenues and reduced public spending on social aid (Müller Kucera and Bauer, 2001). Where affordable child care was available, the rate of hours worked by mothers almost doubled, especially for single-headed households with one or more children. In sum, publicly funded child care resulted in 1) Higher productivity and earnings due to maintaining productive workers in work. 2) Higher contributions to social security and savings; 3) Less dependency on social assistance during both the productive and retirement ages (without affordable child care, many families would fall below the poverty line).[19]

107. Weak public funding, especially for children under 5 years, is a fundamental flaw in the early education and care system in Canada. The evidence presented to the OECD team during its visit may be summarised as follows:

- Other than Quebec, there has been no significant expansion of the system in Canada over the past decade. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 years find a place in a regulated service (see Table 6, Background Report of Canada), compared to, for example, Belgium 63%; Denmark 78%; France 69%; Portugal 40%; UK 60%...
- Long waiting lists exist in community services in several jurisdictions, including in centres catering for children with special needs;
- A general stagnation in quality across the board has been reported (although several centres that the team visited achieved high quality);

[18] These authors were invited by the OECD to address representatives from 17 national administrations concerning ECEC financing. Their paper can be accessed on the OECD website: ***<http://www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood>***

[19] An interesting conclusion of this paper is that as most of these returns on ECEC investments go back to the Federal Authority, the cantons and municipalities in Switzerland remain reluctant to invest in ECEC services.

- Low public expenditure rates per child in child care. Public child care expenditure for children 0-12 years averaged $386 per child, and $3,200 dollars per child care place (Canada Background Report - 2001 figure), compared to $6120 per child in kindergarten and almost $15,000 per student at university (OECD 2002, EAG);
- A market-determined fee structure (except Manitoba and Quebec), resulting in excessive parental contributions to child care costs, ranging from 34% to 82% of costs. The average across the country excluding Quebec is just under 50% of costs compared to a maximum 15% parental contribution in Finland or approximately 25% across Europe;
- An inefficient subsidy system with widely varying and complex eligibility criteria, accessed by only (1997 figures) 22% of lone parents and around 5% of married mothers from low-income families;
- Chronic and generalised under-funding of learning materials, and of infrastructure both physical (premises, outdoor spaces) and non-physical (the infrastructure of planning, administration, training, monitoring, evaluation, data collection…).

108. Canada's indecision about whether ECEC should be publicly funded or remain in the private field may stem less from lack of knowledge about the advantages of investment in early childhood services, than from adherence to an economic orthodoxy that sees the state as a residual provider of services, intervening only when markets fail.[20] There is, in reality, no room for indecision, if Canadian governments wish to invest in human capital at this age, and lift child care out of mediocrity and weak access. The evidence has been available for years, including in the influential Canadian reports, such as the McCain/Mustard study (1999). Most early childhood experts argue today that the quality of care purchased in free markets is generally inadequate, and in many cases dangerous to children's development and future productivity. Many Canadians whom we met during the review found their country's procrastination difficult to understand:

- Several careful financial estimates have already been made about why, how and to what extent Canada should invest in a high quality ECEC service, e.g. the Cleveland/Krashinski study of 1998[21] or the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee report of 2002;
- Education administrations in all provinces in Canada express adherence to the OECD concept of lifelong education, in which early childhood is considered as the foundation stage. The consigning of this educational responsibility to the private sphere is inconsistent, especially in a country where less than 5% of students of school age attend private institutions that are differentiated from the public sector by resource levels.

109. It is fair to note that public funding of the early childhood system has never ceased in Canada. Kindergarten has for many years been well-funded by international standards, but unlike most other OECD countries, Canada covers only 5-year olds to a significant extent. (Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and the UK enrol at least 90% of children by the age of 4 years). For all ages, child care funding remains extremely weak, and doubts too may be raised about the efficiency of the funding mechanism employed.

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[20]. Generally speaking, even in liberal economic states, education is considered as a public good and thus the state can be proactive and provide a public school system, funded through supply-side mechanisms including start-up and operational grants. The Nordic countries began this process for early childhood education and care more than forty years ago, but it has taken time for other countries to follow. The movement has been given a strong impetus with the evidence from brain research and the recognition of early childhood as the foundation stage of lifelong learning.

[21]. The Cleveland/Krashinsky cost-benefit analysis of 1998 outlines the advantages and estimates the costs of establishing a national quality child care system for Canada. Although the authors make conservative assumptions about the magnitude of positive externalities, they conclude that the substantial public investment envisaged would generate important net benefits for Canadian society.

110. To explain: child care in Canada is funded indirectly through tax deductions to parents and through demand-side subsidies attached to children who find a place in a recognised service. The granting of the subsidy and its amount depends on parental income level and other eligibility criteria. In other words, demand-side funding is favoured, that is, providing funds or the promise of funds to parents who will therefore purchase child care.

111. The advantage for government of a subsidy system is that being demand side, it aligns with economic theories widely held in Canada. Moreover, it is low-cost, as the amounts allocated are small. The subsidies are also personal to the citizen-voter; and they allow governments to control demand by expanding or contracting the subsidy level. Other advantages often cited in favour of a subsidy regime are choice for parents and competition among centres. In an ideal market situation, the claim seems logical. In the real world of Canadian child care, however, the choice for parents is both unsure (few parents know the quality indicators of a good service) and extremely limited (there are few accessible services among which to choose, generally because of lack of proximity or excessive cost). As for competition, a subsidy system may eventually generate a sufficient number of centres which will engage in competition, but Canada is not at that point. In fact, in so far as the team could judge, the subsidies offered to low-income families may be inflating the market price, thus making child care too expensive for moderate income families. But this is a question for further analysis.

112. The disadvantages of subsidy funding are equally well-known, and it is interesting to note that in the new Quebec policy, the subsidy method of funding has been dropped. Subsidy funding to child care centres is often inefficient (many eligible parents are unable to access subsidies – see Cleveland and Hyatt, 1997), and costly to operate both at governmental and early childhood centre level. Thousands of individual subsidy claims need to be filled, evaluated and approved annually. For centres too, subsidies lead to widely fluctuating enrolments, resulting in difficulties in planning, and worries about paying and retaining staff during periods when child attendance goes down. In one excellent centre that we visited, for example, all staff were let go during the summer months to live on unemployment insurance, as funds were unavailable to employ them over the summer months. Moreover, a subsidy system attached to family income consigns the education of children to the social welfare system, and can be stigmatising for low-income children and families.

113. The advantages of direct supply-side funding through the payment of operational costs (salaries, materials, infrastructure maintenance…) are often detailed, particularly in education literature:

- The method has long been used in public education, including kindergarten in Canada, with tried and good results;
- The administrative burden is lessened both for administrations and schools ;
- Greater stability is provided to centres, with in return, greater control by government over the planning, size and location of services; over training, curriculum, quality evaluation and data collection;
- Through operational grants and career profiling from the centre, wages and training can be standardised across the board,[22] leading in general to better working conditions for staff, greater job satisfaction, less staff turnover and more appreciation of their professional status by the public;
- In supply-side funding, the infrastructure of planning, administration, training, monitoring, evaluation, data collection… is generally ensured by government at a scale that makes it cost-effective.

[22]. According to the national Council of Welfare (1999), wages for child care staff in municipal settings in Canada in 1992 averaged $13.88 per hour, and in commercial settings $8.07 per hour. One may assume that the least experienced and least qualified staff worked in commercial services, where on average, staff stayed for only 2.9 years. One third of the drop-out staff stayed permanently outside child care – a great waste of training and initial vocational choice.

114. A more complete discussion of these and other financing issues may be found in *Starting Strong* (OECD, 2001) and in the Canadian literature, most notably, in the important Cleveland/Krashinsky study *Financing ECEC Services in OECD Countries* (2003). In that study, the authors suggest pertinently that the debate over demand-side and supply-side subsidies is often a proxy for a quite different debate over standards and quality. They continue:

> *"In systems with little public money, parents often rely on informal child care when they work. This care has minimal educational and developmental components, and is usually of quite low quality. Demand-side subsidies cost less (to government), because they subsidize these kinds of low-cost child care. And because the subsidy rates are often set at low levels, most parents cannot afford the high-cost, high-quality ECEC that most child care professionals favor."*

115. The economic research is complemented by further studies showing the benefits brought to children and families by high quality early childhood services. A summary of the more important national studies can be found in the OECD *Education Policy Analysis* issues of 1999 and 2002. Perhaps more relevant to Canadians is the 1998 McMaster University study, a randomised clinical trial looking at the impacts of early childhood interventions on the health and social outcomes of families. The study found that parents having access to high-quality child care were much more likely to leave welfare and earn higher incomes; and were less likely to use expensive public health and social services. The research concludes that the saving to the Ontario government services on the 314 families in the study amounted to $53,580 per year.

116. However, in ECEC financing and other areas, perhaps the most important object of study for Canadian early childhood policy makers at this particular moment is the experience of Quebec – the aims of its early childhood policy, its funding and implementation. There are certainly many important lessons to learn from that experiment, and not least: how to fund a universal early development system for all Canadian children.

The separation of child care from early education

117. Canada is not unique in having separate systems for education and care. Indeed, the majority of OECD countries have inherited the division, with older children from 3, 4 or 5 years of age being offered a free morning session of early education, while day-long child care for the younger children has developed more timidly under social welfare or health auspices. The disadvantages arising from this rift are outlined in the research literature and need not be detailed here (OECD, 2001; Bennett, 2003). In summary, the division between child care and early education gives rise to:

- Under-investment in child care, as if toddlers were not moving through a critical developmental stage with time-limited windows of opportunity;
- Policy and service delivery confusion with different staff training levels and much poorer qualification levels and working conditions required of child care staff;
- Inadequate learning approaches employed in both child care and kindergartens;
- Child/staff ratios in excess of 15:1 practised in kindergarten in most countries.[23]

[23] Research indicates that a ratio of 15:1 in kindergartens is an upper limit for children under five years (see, for example, Research Report, No. 320 of the Department for Education and Skills, London, 2000), and that for more individualised attention, lower ratios are more appropriate. This is generally recognised in the child care sector, which leads to curious situations in OECD countries where the Education Act may allow groups of 25:1 or more in kindergarten settings catering for 3-4 year old children, while the corresponding Child Care Act allows a maximum ratio of 10:1 for children of the same age in child care services.

118. In Canada, publicly funded education is a legal entitlement for all children from compulsory school age (usually at 6 years). Early education is also viewed as a societal responsibility, but only kindergarten for five-year-olds - widely available and publicly funded in all Provinces - is treated as if it were an entitlement. In contrast, provision of child care for young children has historically been viewed as primarily the responsibility of the individual family, and provision has not been planned, unlike the situation in some OECD countries where it is conceived as a universal service. With the exception of Quebec where government has been proactive, child care provision has occurred only where concerned groups have taken the initiative, and user-parents pay most of the costs. In a number of ways then, the *ad hoc* nature of child care provision in Canada compares unfavourably with the more systematic provision provided at kindergarten level:

Table 18 - Comparison of kindergarten in the year prior to grade 1 and regulated child care

Service	**Kindergarten**	**Regulated child care (including regulated nursery schools and preschools)**
Responsible government ministry or department	A ministry or department of education, except in P.E.I. where responsibility is shared between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services.	Generally a ministry or department of social or community services. In British Columbia, multiple ministries have direct responsibility for issues pertaining to child care.
Legislation	The Education or School Act, except in P.E.I. where the Child Care Facilities Act governs the regulation of kindergarten.	Legislation specific to child care
Administration	Local public school board or district or similar entity, private schools. The exceptions are P.E.I., where kindergarten is provided in and administered by child care centres, and Alberta where it may be provided by stand-alone programs.	A board of directors of a non-profit program or an owner/operator of a commercial program. Municipal administration occurs throughout Ontario and in two Alberta municipalities.
Funding source	A block grant to the school board from provincial or territorial general revenue in all provinces/territories. In some provinces funding is a mixture of the provincial block grant and local funds raised through property taxes	Primarily fees paid by parents and government fee subsidies paid on behalf of low income parents. In most provinces/territories there are also application-based operating grants for eligible programs.
Location	In a custom-built elementary school building except in P.E.I. where kindergarten may operate in a child care centre and in Alberta where kindergarten may be located in a school, a child care centre or have its own premises.	In a child care centre that may be stand-alone or located in part of another building such as a school, an apartment building, etc. or in the home of a family child care provider
Type of provision	Part day basis, usually 2 ½ hours, or full-day on alternate days, except in three provinces where it is a full school-day.	Child care operates full-day, usually somewhere between 7am to 6pm. Nursery schools/ preschools operate on a part-day basis, usually 2.5 hours a day
Children served	Regular kindergarten serves five-year-olds in all provinces and territories and some four-year-olds in some provinces.	Children age 0 – 6 for regular child care and age 6-12 for school-age child care; age 2 –5 for nursery schools/preschools.
Staffing	Teachers who must have either a four-year undergraduate degree that includes specific teacher training or a three- or four-year undergraduate degree plus one year of teacher training; teachers' assistants who work under the supervision of the teacher are not required to have any specific level of education or training	Centres are staffed by child care staff. In 1998, 81.7% of centre staff had completed at least one year of post-secondary training in early childhood education (Doherty *et al*., 2000b, Figure 4.1). Family child care homes are staffed by child care providers. In 1999, 40.3% had some family child care-specific training (Doherty *et al*., 2000a, Table 4.2).
Program delivery	Generally delivered in a school classroom with 19-23 students and one teacher. In P.E.I. child:staff ratio for kindergarten classrooms is 12:1. An assistant may be present if there is a child with special needs. The program is expected to follow a curriculum established by the province or territory.	Centres usually group children by age into different classrooms (although there is some provision for mixed -age groupings). Family child care providers operate out of their own homes and usually have a mixed-age group. Except in Québec, child care programs are not expected by the province/territory to follow a specific curriculum

Source: Friendly et al., 2002.

119. From the perspective of the review team, reconciling these many differences is a pre-requisite to achieving a coherent system of early education and care in Canada. In English speaking countries, for historical reasons, coherence has proved elusive. For other OECD countries, principally Nordic countries, achieving integration of education and care has been relatively straightforward, and was initially led by the local authorities.

Access and equity

120. Canada is justifiably proud of the high proportion of women with young children who return to work after parental leave. The skills of these women are needed in industry and commerce, and their participation in the work force, maintains equal opportunity and broadens and strengthens the tax base. Moreover, Canada also regards it important to lower costs to the state by encouraging women in receipt of social assistance or welfare payments to return to the workforce or go into training. For this reason, there are various schemes to support parents in the workplace:

- Full or partial subsidization of child care costs for low income families by provincial/territorial governments;
- Tax relief available to eligible families through the Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED);
- Payment of maternity and parental benefit to eligible mothers under Employment Insurance. There are further options for parental leave, decided at provincial/territorial level through employment standards legislation.

121. To be fully successful, these schemes are contingent on child care availability and its quality. They require enough places for children from 6 months (now 1 year) upwards (or younger where parents are not eligible for maternity or parental benefits). However, no province or territory provides sufficient child care places, and the shortage is most acute for the youngest children. Table 9 on the availability of child care centre places in the various provinces/territories makes the extent of the shortfall clear. Coverage rates range from 5.6% in Saskatchewan to 32.3% in the Yukon. The table does not include regulated family day-care spaces, as age-specific information on the number of children age 0-6 enrolled in this type of care is not available. It is reckoned that family daycare may account for approximately 20% of all regulated child care spaces in Canada for children age 0 – 12. But even taking this figure into account, access is relatively very low. In addition, as indicated above, research on family daycare in many countries shows it to be of generally low quality.

122. Adequate access to early childhood services is determined by availability and costs of provision. We know that in Canada, both these criteria – access and affordability – present real challenges to many parents. Even the subsidy system, where it exists, is unsatisfactory.[24] Cleveland and Hyatt (1997) suggest that only 22% of lone parents and around 5% of married mothers from low income families receive subsidies. Subsidies are therefore used by less than a quarter of lone parents, and a tiny percentage of low income families. Subsidies and other government funding do not usually meet the full cost of providing child care, and parents must therefore contribute from the family budget. According to the *Canada Background Report* (Social Development Canada, 2003), on average, approximately 50% of child care centres' revenues come from fees paid by all parents (subsidized and non-subsidized) and in some instances, parent fees may represent as much as 80% of child care centres' revenues.

[24]. Indirect subsidy systems are often unsatisfactory, especially from the perspective of low-income families and minority families with low educational levels. A recent (May, 2004) Daycare Trust report on child care services in London comes to the same conclusion: that problems with the subsidy system effectively exclude parents who really need subsidies the most. In sum, accessing the indirect subsidy provided by the Working Tax Credit is too complex for many of these families.

123. In order to avoid these high costs, certain groups of women will choose to remain at home with their children, although their choice may condemn themselves and their children to welfare and a subsistence standard of living. Other parents – the majority - return to work, but if they are in modest or low-income situations, they will do so in stressful conditions. Family budgets are strained by high child care fees, and, in many instances, parents will be obliged to confide their children to unregistered family day carers with little guarantee of quality. In sum, for a significant group of families, the situation may be described as one of high stress for mothers and poor quality services for young children. This compares strikingly with some OECD countries, e.g. Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where *all* demand is met, and a quality service is considered an *entitlement* for families which local government is obliged to provide. In these countries too, parents can rely on the early childhood centre to contribute to the development and well-being of their young children, a consideration that sometimes appears secondary in the Canadian popular debate.

124. Another observed feature of Canadian provision was that services for vulnerable groups were often available only on an *ad hoc* basis. Irwin, Lero and Brophy (2000) argue, for example, that it can be extremely difficult to obtain *appropriate* child care for children with disabilities, since staff lack training to deal with such children, buildings are not adapted, and funding is lacking for subsidies. This is partly due to under-funding of special services, but also to the failure to establish a universal early childhood system as a first line against child and family poverty. In addition to contributing toward the development of young children, a comprehensive early childhood education and care system is instrumental in reducing poverty and family dysfunction in three ways: 1) by increasing access to the workforce for mothers, thus providing more family income; 2) by providing outreach to families when signs of family stress become apparent in the behaviour of young children; and 3) by providing positive experiences in a protected environment for young children from all social categories without stigma attaching. Above all, it is the young children who must be protected, as the ravages of poverty on development at that age can be irretrievable.

125. In sum, although there is a wide range of support for young children and families in Canada, ECEC services seem insufficient, inconsistent and under-funded. They vary a great deal between provinces and territories, and between different kinds of provision. Over the last ten years, if one takes into account inflation, the only significant increase in ECEC funding has taken place in Quebec, despite the new Federal initiatives. In consequence, the provision of education and care services for young children has stagnated, and quality has not improved sufficiently. Yet, the research is fairly unanimous that the systematic provision of early childhood services, subsidised and properly supervised by government, yields better results for both mainstream and disadvantaged children than a multiplicity of special services funded in response to family crisis or social pressures.

Access for Aboriginal children

126. We noted in Chapter 3 that the demographic profile of First Nation Communities and other indigenous peoples is rapidly changing. Birth rates are high in comparison to the declining birth rate of other Canadians. Yet they remain a highly marginalized population, many of whose children suffer the problems associated with erosion of cultural identity, poverty and dislocation (see for example, Ball, J. & Pence, A. 2003).

127. The Federal government underwrites a variety of programs for these children that we listed in the previous chapter. However, as these programs are supported by different funding streams and are subject to various regulatory regimes, effective streamlining of services is proving difficult. Integration of Federal programs with parallel Provincial programs seems weak, which may serve to isolate further Aboriginal children both on- and off-reserve. Although Canada has a recognised international reputation for the integration of immigrant populations, social stratification of its own Aboriginal community seems widespread, not least in the cities. The demoralization of Aboriginal groups is expressed in social breakdown; alcoholism, high delinquency and crime rates, school drop-out, teenage pregnancies… As one First Nation adviser commented to the team: "*we are between a rock and a hard place".*

Many Aboriginal families living in the cities wish to access the mainstream, but the issue is both complex and unpredictable: how can new identities be constructed by Aboriginal children, drawing on their traditions, culture and values.[25] The proactive support of government to the process will be critical.

128. We did see an excellent Aboriginal Head Start urban program in Ottawa (see Box 7 below). As with other examples of good practice, this was due to excellent leadership: a knowledgeable and highly committed staff group, and an expert Inuit fundraiser and project leader.

Box 7 - Tungasuvvingat Inuit Head Start.

Tungasuvvingat Inuit is a social services organization based in Ottawa. It provides counselling, outreach, family, youth and employment services to the urban Inuit population. It is the umbrella organization for the Tungasuvvingat Inuit Head Start program. Health Canada provides funding for the Head Start program, but the umbrella organization also fundraises for it from many different sources to provide extra amenities and resources. Inuit families are often poor and demoralized in an urban setting. The family resource centre located in the same building, funded by Health Canada as part of the Community Action Progam for Chidren, runs programs for Inuit adults (including parents) but also organizes transport for the children, and helps with a variety of family support – including clothing and co-op food-boxes. The target population for the program are children of Inuit descent between two-and-a-half and five years of age and their families. The program is open Monday through Thursday, in the morning from 9 - 11.30am and in the afternoon from 1 - 3.30 p.m. Fridays is used for team meetings and for the development of resource materials.

The aim of the program is to provide immersion in the Inuktitut language and Inuit way of life. Inuit culture is not regarded as an add-on to the program, but as the source of all activities in which the children engage. Although the program is located in what looks from the outside like a modest family house, the interior has been refurbished to make the furnishings and décor reflect Inuit life as much as possible. There is Inuit artwork mounted on the walls; the floor tiles use the traditional Inuit symbol for a person; and a rug has been commissioned with Polar animals woven into the design. There are displays of Inuit materials, such as bleached carved bones. Inuit food is provided, including whale meat and arctic char – or as the Inuit teacher describes them "soul-food". The children also hear the traditional throat music and use traditional play materials such as bone games, ulus, drums, amautis, atigis, kamiks and Inuit dolls. The childrens' own photos and artwork are mounted for display on igloo shaped designs. The word games and books the children use are especially made to use Inuit symbols and words. Inuit words are posted everywhere in the rooms, using Roman orthography and Inuit syllabics, with guidance on pronunciation. Parents who do not speak Inuktitut are sent similar word sheets to practice with their children at home.

Staff dealing with the young children are both Inuit and urban Ottawans. The program director is qualified to postgraduate level. She puts much effort into team work and into developing appropriate materials. She also liaises very closely with the family support program and wider Tungasuvvingat centre. The senior Inuit teacher is very committed to the ECEC program, and speaks Inuktitut as much as possible to the children. Her aim is to give children a strong sense of who they are, to engender pride in being Inuit.

129. In contrast, we saw practice in the Aboriginal communities that gave us serious concern - both the low funding and quality of programming with the most tokenistic concessions to indigenous language. Obviously, there are many reasons why this is so, but the seriousness of the issue for young children is clear. To lose one's culture and to know your language has no future is likely to have a harmful effect on the self-identity and self-confidence of young children – both essential aims in ECEC programming.

130. In Norway, a similar situation existed for the Sami population, the original settlers living in the north. Today, the Norwegian *Early Childhood Centre (Barnehager) Act* states that centres 'for Sami children in Sami districts shall be based on Sami language and culture*'*. Likewise, the national curriculum has a chapter on Sami Language and Culture which recognises that the 'Sami language and culture are a

[25]. Cultural traditions which stress consensus and non-aggression fit uneasily into an individualistic, competitive lifestyle. Yet, Aboriginal peoples are part of Canadian identity and heritage. In addition, as in Australia, concepts of land and property held by Aboriginal groups are considerably at odds with the mainstream legal notion of ownership.

part of our shared heritage which Norway and the Nordic countries have a special responsibility for defending'. Sami children receive maximum funding in all day care, and special supports are granted to Sami parents to establish their own centres. According to the national curriculum, Sami parents should be able to choose 'whether to seek a place for their children in a Sami or a Norwegian day care institution'. A Sami *barnehager* (early childhood centre) is defined as:

> *one where the children in the institution have a Sami background...The institution's aim is to strengthen the children's identity as Sami by promoting the use of the Sami language and by imparting Sami culture... [The early childhood centre] is headed by Sami teaching staff.*

131. The prairie provinces, in particular, where Aboriginal groups form a significant part of the population, recognize the imperative of addressing these issues. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have highlighted the need for schools to be *inclusive*. For example the Regina Public School Division entered into a partnership with Metis Nation Regina Local and File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council to develop a joint educational model in two schools. We visited one of them, Albert Community School in Regina which attempts to use a traditional First Nation's holistic approach to education for all its children, encompassing mental spiritual, emotional and physical aspects. Some of the community programs at the School of Youth and Community Studies, University of Victoria are also delivered jointly with First Nation peoples and offer a model of how training can be inclusive (Pence and Ball, 2000). We are sure there are many excellent Canadian examples to draw on.

132. Perhaps the most useful international partner for Canada with regard to an inclusive early childhood approach is New Zealand, which faces similar issues with its indigenous Maori population. The ECEC curriculum for *all* children in New Zealand, *Te Whàriki*, (a woven mat), was jointly worked out with Maori groups, and draws heavily on Maori concepts of "belonging" and "contribution". As Carr and May (2000) comment, "*The framework is a celebration of the country's biculturalism"*. Separate language immersion programs still exist for some Maori children, but many Maori parents send their children to mainstream kindergartens in the knowledge that mainstream kindergartens follow a national curriculum in which Maori language and values are recognised and respected.

Quality issues

133. We have already discussed the division between early education and care in Canada, in particular the disadvantages it poses from a managerial and service delivery perspective. Our discussion of quality in ECEC in Canada will also reflect this dichotomy. Education and care, even when dealing with the same age group, make very different assumptions about quality.

Kindergartens

134. According to the *Background Report of Canada* :

> *Statements of desired child outcomes for kindergarten tend to exhibit commonality across the provinces/territories in their goals – assisting children to develop a positive self-concept, a positive attitude towards learning, an understanding of appropriate social behaviour with peers and with adults, communication skills that set the foundation for learning to read and write, an understanding of numbers and of basic concepts such as length and weight, and some basic understanding of the community in which they live. These goals all reflect the objective of providing children with the basic skills for success in grade one and are consistent in intent with the goal of the early kindergartens established in the late 1800s.*

135. Although staff in the kindergartens visited by the OECD review team were positive and caring toward young children, it seemed that the holistic goals mentioned above were sometimes overlooked, or at least, an appropriate proactive programme to achieve them was not in evidence. Practice in the kindergartens attached to schools tended for the most part to be rather conventional. Many kindergarten teachers, we were informed, are not trained to work with younger children. Pedagogical practice in several instances alternated between direct group teaching and, it seemed, weakly planned activities in

various corners, table top games and some indoor play. Sometimes, children seemed bored or disoriented. At the same time, we are aware that one of the few studies to measure quality in kindergartens across a number of provinces –using the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (Harms and Clifford, 1990) – found that 70% of the kindergartens evaluated obtained ratings in the acceptable to good range (a total score of 4.5 or higher). (*Background Report of Canada* , 2003).[26]

136. The holistic goals and learning dispositions mentioned in the citation above from the *Background Report of Canada* are important goals. Research shows that it is crucial to develop these traits in young children. Not only are they strong predictors of scholastic performance in the future but they are also an important outcome of all education at whatever stage (see, for example, OECD, 2003 PISA). That it is possible to nurture such dispositions in the kindergarten stage has been demonstrated by validated, open framework programs, such as Reggio Emilia, High/Scope, Pyramide in the Netherlands or Experiential Education in Flanders (OECD, 2004). However, strong team planning and expertise are necessary to deliver an effective open framework curriculum while achieving cognitive goals. On the other hand, if a curriculum is dominated by pre-defined skills and items of knowledge, the child may be placed in a context of success or failure that inhibits learning, and neglects the broader goals (Sylva, 2000).

Quality in child care provision

137. The recent *You Bet I Care* study in Canada (Goelman *et al*., 2000) in which the ECERS rating scale was applied to 234 child care centres and 231 regulated family child care homes across Canada found the quality in child care ranged from low to middling, and did not provide the kinds of experiences that support or enhance children's social, language and cognitive development.[27] Reasons for this negative evaluation are not difficult to find. Although some provinces are working toward a curriculum and quality framework, quality aims and goals for child care services are generally not clearly stated or pursued.

138. Some individual services, such as those portrayed in our examples, have set themselves more ambitious aims and objectives, but from our limited experience, they seem to be atypical. In many centres, ideas about safety dominated the activities and environment. Some of the accommodation, even in newly built centres, was very poor, although it met the required health and safety standards. Rooms were barren places, often poorly lit, with relatively few resources to interest young children and little evidence of children's own work. Child care workers seemed to feel that children were vulnerable, and in consequence, they tended to be protective and interventionist. In several places we heard children being cautioned to sit down and not to move, even across a carpeted room, for fear they might get out of control and hurt themselves or others. The focus on sit-down, table-top activities, and the lack of activity rooms or proper playgrounds tended, in our view, to inhibit children from unloading their energy, and stretching the limits of their imagination and creativity.

139. We were surprised to find a lack of direct access to outside space for children in most of the centres we visited. In Finland and Sweden, which experience similar climatic conditions to Canada, children commonly spend three hours a day or more outside. Programmes in these countries are usually divided into two sessions, one morning and one afternoon, with frequently the afternoon session taking place out-of-doors. Playgrounds are large; or children may go to the woods. During this time they are encouraged to do sports and play active games. Exploration and respect for nature is also a feature of these outdoor settings, and the work of Linnaeus is continued by these young natural scientists! Teachers also organize seasonal activities, like cross-country skiing, even for children as young as three years. Many centres also have facilities for indoor movement, and a gymnasium or a gym-type space. Similarly, in Norway, there

[26]. The research studies on regulated care in Canada have mostly used the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). These scales measure caregiver centre standards, but do not provide individual outcomes for children

[27]. In PEI, other ECERS measures have rated centres higher than low to middling.

is an emphasis on becoming acclimatised to – and getting to appreciate - harsh weather conditions. Children may even camp outside rather than use the indoors. There are significant numbers of forest and nature kindergartens in all these countries, and perhaps because of the nature of outdoor programming, male pedagogues continue to work with young children.

140. In contrast, the early childhood centres that we visited in Canada placed little emphasis on outdoor programming, although the public authorities recommend a minimum exercise requirement of at least 30 minutes per day of *vigorous* activity for children (Health Canada, 2002a), and the Aboriginal culture of Canada places great value on outdoor activity and knowledge of nature. We were frequently told that children could choose between activities, but a choice that children seemed rarely able to make was to run about or engage in interesting outdoor activities. Conformity to the teacher's wishes seemed to be the rule. Yet in a centre we visited that did allow children freedom of movement, the children were in constant motion between indoors and out. At the same time, they maintained good contact with their project group and continued to interact with teachers, who were constantly present to support them and orient their learning.

Unregulated care

141. We saw only regulated child care. Unregulated care in all countries is generally assumed to be of a lower standard (see for example, Kontos *et al.,* 1995 or the NICHD studies in the US). In 2001, regulated care provided for 12.1% of children aged 0-12. Given the 70% labour force participation of women in Canada, this suggests a very large unregulated sector. Beach *et al*., (1998) suggest that for 1995, the most recent year for which data is available, 62% of children received unregulated care. This is an issue of real concern. Quality enforcement in the regulated sector is difficult enough, but impossible in the unregulated sector. Moreover, the predominance of unregulated care also raises an equity concern, viz. that public funding of provision reaches only a very limited number of families. The quality of a system must also include equitable outcomes. Access cannot be a preserve for the fortunate children in recognised settings, but for all families and young children seeking child care.

Staffing as a determinant of quality

142. In the absence of federal or provincial/territorial guidelines on quality, ensuring quality falls on the shoulders of staff. International research supports the view that high quality provision is dependent on well trained staff with ongoing access to different professional development opportunities. However, staff qualifications and training remain a major challenge in Canada. In day care centres, staff may be required – depending on the province – to have only a one year certificate, and in others, a two or three year diploma.[28] In family child care settings, requirements are even more lax, and, apart from a vague requirement of good character, may be totally absent. Again, the requirements for the number of staff with an educational qualification vary between provinces, but in no province, do all staff need an educational diploma.

143. Two studies, "*Our Child Care Workforce"* (Beach *et al*., 1998) and "*Unionization and Quality in Early Childhood Programs*" (Doherty, 2002) suggest that staff recruitment and retention have reached critical levels, primarily because of low wage levels. Recruitment and retention have become major issues in the child care sector, with most services experiencing shortfalls of staff, even where, as in some provinces, there are wage enhancement grants and payments. High turnover is associated with poor outcomes for children, as continuity of care is of paramount importance for young children. The child care training offered is commonly a post-school diploma level of two years. Some provinces have set targets for achieving a proportion of trained staff in services, but for lack of training outlets and tuition

[28]. In some provinces, however, directors of child care centres are required to have up to a four-year university degree or a two-year diploma plus an ECE specialization.

subsidies, it is doubtful whether these targets can be met. Tuition costs to gain an additional diploma are high and for child care staff, the opportunity costs are far greater than any conceivable payback in future earnings. In addition, it is difficult to transfer credits between different training institutes, particularly if one of them is in a different province! (*Background Report of Canada*, 2003).

144. The quality of training available in child care also seems problematic, especially when compared to teacher training. Although kindergarten teacher training in Canada is often not specific enough, teachers are required to complete a university degree and receive, in general, practical training in the delivery of a curriculum. Kindergarten teachers typically work in a larger setting, a school, where the focus of the institution as a whole is also on learning. While one might not agree with a narrow school-readiness approach or the high child:staff ratios, kindergarten classes are generally well-invested with trained teachers, good pedagogical materials and suitable (indoor) furnishings. In contrast, child care centres and family daycare homes may not work to a curriculum at all, even a developmental one. Training of child care staff, where it has occurred, does not tend to focus on learning, pedagogy and curricular activities. Moreover, child care centres are usually small (their size is often limited by regulation) and there is no immediate wider professional reference group for staff or a tradition of professional development, as in a school.

145. The following table summarizes the differences in staffing between care and education.

Table 19 - Staffing roles and required training in different forms of ECEC, 2002

Program	Supervisory Role	Required initial training	Age range of children covered by the initial training	In-service training
Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten	Principal: responsible for the overall operation of the school. Teacher: responsible for a group of children. Teacher's assistant: works under the supervision of the teacher.	Same as school teacher, some jurisdictions also require a post-graduate course in educational administration. Every jurisdiction except PEI requires a minimum of 4 years of university which must include teacher training courses, but not necessarily, early childhood training. PEI requires a 2-year early childhood training. No specific educational requirements.	Depends on the area of specialization in the person's initial degree. Specialization in 'primary' covers approximately age 5 or 6 to age 9 or 10. Not applicable.	Routinely expected and provided on a regular and frequent basis
Child care centre, nursery school and preschool where they are regulated under child care legislation.	Director: responsible for the overall operation of the centre. Early childhood educator: responsible for a group of children. Assistant: works under the educator's supervision.	Varies across jurisdictions from a two-year ECE college credential to no requirements. Ranges from two-thirds of staff in a centre must have a two-year early childhood education (ECE) credential to no requirements. No specific educational requirement except in B.C. where assistants are required to have completed one ECE course.	Age 0 – 12 Age 0 – 12 Not applicable.	Only provided on a regular and frequent basis if director initiates it.
Regulated school-age child care program.	Director: responsible for the overall operation of the program. Staff: responsible for a group of children.	In 7 jurisdictions, school-age child care falls under the same legislation as child care centres. The other jurisdictions do not have any specific ECE training requirements.	Age 5 – 12 Age 5 – 12	Unlikely to be provided

Family child care agency.	Director: responsible for the overall operation of the agency. Home visitor: responsible for monitoring and supporting the providers. Family child care provider: responsible for a group of children.	No specific educational requirements One jurisdiction requires a two-year ECEC-related college credential, most agencies in other jurisdictions require an undergraduate degree. Varies from a 45-hour course within the first two years of providing care to no requirements.	Not applicable. Age 0 – 12 Age 0 – 12	Unlikely to be provided
Independently licensed family child care provider	As in the other program types, a government licensing official: is responsible for licensing and monitoring providers. Family child care provider: responsible for a group of children.	Usually required to have a university degree, but not usually required to have an ECE credential. Hence, quality of monitoring is extremely variable. One jurisdiction requires an ECE orientation course before starting to provide care, three require a 30- to 120 hour orientation within the first three years of being licensed.	Age 0 – 12 Age 0 - 12	Unlikely to be provided

Sources: Friendly et al., 2002, with Review Team additions.

146. As can be deduced from the Table, the requirements for kindergarten teacher training are more rigorous. However, the requirement to obtain a university degree tends to hide the fact that the degree in question may not carry a significant module of early childhood theory or training. It is problematic to have teachers working in kindergarten who have not been trained for the role – even if they receive a top up or in-service training course - particularly if that role is likely to expand downwards to junior kindergarten, as already in several Provinces. Canada is not alone among countries lacking more targeted training for its kindergarten teachers.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

147. The OECD team has highlighted throughout this *Note*, four main, interrelated issues – financing, access, equity and quality – that have emerged from our review of early education and care in Canada: In this final chapter, we summarise our conclusions and propose some recommendations to stimulate discussion among governments, policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders involved in ECEC in Canada. This, we believe, is a first task, both at federal and provincial level: to sit down together to conceptualise a coherent, long-term vision for each province and the country as a whole, based on the best available evidence and prioritised into defined steps and time frames. The OECD team will be well satisfied if its conclusions, summarised below, can provide an impetus for that reflection.

Upstream policy recommendations

1. Strengthen the present Federal/Provincial/Territorial agreements and focus them as much as possible on child development and early learning

148. Background: For the past decade, growth in early childhood services in Canada has slowed significantly. Government polices largely focussed on "strengthening families", despite profound economic and social changes that affect the capacity of many parents to support early childhood development. In many government documents, children's services were proposed as a labour market support, or assigned to the sphere of family or welfare policy. The result is a patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services, within which a small "child care" sector is seen as a labour market support, separated from child development and education. This fragile creation relies to a great extent on the voluntary work of women and survives with inadequate public financial support.

149. Through the Framework Agreements, the Federal government has become involved again with early development, with some promising results. At a federal level, child development policies have been given some prioritisation, and federal financing has been used to leverage provincial/territorial collaboration. At the provincial level, the broad goals of these agreements have met with consensus among the majority of provinces. This is real progress, as previously public policy for young children at federal and provincial levels seemed divided and incoherent. However, in the view of the OECD review team, it will be necessary to further focus Agreement goals on child development and early education, if a mainstream early childhood service is to emerge across Canada in future years.

150. Observation: The *Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care* is a significant move away from traditional familial policy. In focussing on the child, it renews links with evidence-based research, which has consistently pointed to the developmental and educational advantages of providing high quality, professional early education and care for young children. The McCain/Mustard study of 1999 sifted through the evidence related to early development and brain research, concluding that government should give as much priority to the early childhood period as to obligatory schooling. This conclusion is echoed in numerous independent reports from Canada, from international research, and by at least two Nobel Prize-winners in economics: Amartya Sen and Jim Heckman.

151. For these reasons, we encourage the Canadian government to consider funding a publicly managed service for Canadian children from 1-6 years, focussed on the development of young children, which is capable also of fulfilling a significant role with respect to child health, parenting and family engagement in education. A policy in favour of the development of young Canadian children should be seen as the cornerstone of family policy. A universal early childhood education and care system can support in effect,

not only the development and education of the children but also their families, and provide a model of good parenting and interaction with young children. If conceived in sufficiently broad terms, the expanded early childhood centre can act also as a powerful instrument to counter the effects of child poverty.

2. Encourage provincial governments to develop, with the major stakeholder groups, an early childhood strategy with priority targets, benchmarks and timelines, and with guaranteed budgets to fund appropriate governance and expansion.

152. Background: Already several provinces in Canada have formulated management and development plans after consultation with the major stakeholders. In addition to concrete targets, the Manitoba *Five-Year Plan for Child Care* outlines principles to guide policy design, while the PEI *Strategy for Healthy Childhood Development* speaks of the research evidence, the guiding principles, enabling conditions and strategic directions. In addition, it identifies key areas for immediate action and evaluation. The expertise is already present in Canada. What is needed is the political will and investment to carry through a system level reform.

153. In this context, we encourage all provinces – if they have not already done so - to develop a *Provincial Plan for Early Childhood Services Development*, rolled over on a three-year basis, with clearly spelt out goals, targets, time-lines, responsibilities and accountability measures from co-operating ministries and federal bodies. While universal in intent, the plan should include annual targets and specific funding for the important subsystems, such as disadvantaged children, Aboriginal children, and children with special needs. The plan should also aim to bring provincial regulations and pedagogical regimes into line with current knowledge. Criteria for centre performance, such as minimum benchmarks, outcome measures, training levels and the like could also be included so that parents can be assured that services are properly resourced and monitored. We encourage in so far as appropriate, decentralisation of management to the local level, e.g. toward publicly mandated, community or municipal agencies which would have combined responsibility for both kindergarten and child care development. In parallel, reinforcement of management at administration levels will be needed to take on the basic system responsibilities such as, consensus building, regular data collection and analysis, long-term planning, financial steering, standard setting and supportive evaluation.

154. Early childhood policy development in Canada is ably supported by a vibrant research community and stakeholder constituency. It seemed to the review team that the consultation of such groups should be given an obligatory and legal status in development planning at provincial level. In many instances, expert groups can move policy making from the political field toward a more research driven focus, and maintain objectivity and continuity in policy. In the review team's experience, framework policy agreements negotiated between experienced government officials, researchers and stakeholders are likely to be evidence-based, realistic and command public consent.

155. Observation: In stressing the developmental and learning aspects of an early childhood service, we are not proposing that a mainstream ECEC service should be conceived as a school for young children. In fact, early childhood centres are more effective when they function as a community hub of interconnected services for families, and act as a frontline mechanism for child well-being, screening and prevention. However, the link with education should be central, and children in the early childhood centre may be expected – as has become the goal of many progressive schools – to become increasingly self-directed, able and motivated to learn.

3. Build bridges between child care and kindergarten education, with the aim of integrating ECEC both at ground level and at policy and management levels

156. Background: In terms of sheer numbers, responsibility for early childhood in Canada is already considerable. The sector caters at the moment for about 850,000 children (regulated child care, family daycare and kindergarten included) and could reach well over 1,5 million if Canada were to decide to put an end to unregulated child care. In sum, if one follows the normal four-fold division of education into early education, primary schooling, lower secondary and upper secondary, ECEC policy makers are dealing with potentially a very large group of children. Policy for such a group should not be made in a piece-meal way, either at federal or provincial level.

157. This is a reality increasingly recognised in other OECD countries, where a lead ministry or child development agency is given charge of legislation, regulation, financing, policy, training, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation for all child development services from 1 to 6 years. The aim is to conceptualise and deliver care and education as one seamless programme to young children. In New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, the Ministry of Education takes the lead; in Denmark, Finland, Norway, a Child/Family or Social Affairs Ministry… In Quebec, the Ministry of the Family has responsibility for children up to 5 years, and in PEI, the Ministry of Health and Social Services to 6 years. More recently, Georgia in the United States has broken new ground by creating one agency responsible for early childhood services across the State.

158. Observations: In the view of the OECD review team, greater integration of kindergarten and child care would bring real advantages in the Canadian context. The advantages are considerable:

- More effective investment in the younger children, and significant savings brought about by better integration of services;
- More coherent policy and greater consistency across the sectors in regulations, funding and staffing regimes, costs and opening hours;
- A shift in kindergarten opening hours toward full-day provision – with real advantages for the young children and their parents, e.g. the short opening hours of many kindergarten services in Canada creates difficulties for working parents.
- Improved public supervision of services, and thus easier identification of[29] and access by parents to quality care;
- The emergence of a specific early childhood professional, trained to work with both young children and their families. The emergence of this new professional profile has led in other countries to higher recruitment and training levels, better pay and conditions for staff – which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children;
- Enhanced continuity of children's early childhood experiences as variations in access and quality can be lessened, and links at the services level – across age groups and settings – are more easily created.

[29]. The literature concerning the capacity of parents to recognise good quality in child care is not optimistic (see Cleveland & Krashinski, 2003; Helburn, 1995). Beyond the psychological need to be positive about what they can provide for their child, parents often know little about the structural, process and pedagogical indicators of good quality education and care. Again, parental goals are not always consistent with good quality practice, e.g. they will often value precocious literacy more than holistic development or co-operative skills. Furthermore, in the absence of a good public service, research has shown that as many as 65% of parents (in the United States) believe they have little choice among child care options (Galinsky *et al*., 1994).

159. The administrative advantages are also considerable.

- *At the provincial level*, a single department responsible for all young children could interface more effectively with federal initiatives, both pan-Canadian and Aboriginal. Planning and contact with local centres could also become more effective and less expensive, as, in an integrated system, there is no longer need for separate planning functions. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation of critical elements can be more efficiently undertaken from a single department with its own pedagogical advisors.

- *At federal level*, an expert secretariat responsible for young children could develop a general policy framework for the whole country and encourage the even development of early childhood systems across Canada, in which parents in every province can expect roughly equivalent rights and services. A Federal secretariat could support on a regular basis the work of the provinces in early education and care, build bridges between certification and training regimes across the country, develop pan-Canadian standards and encourage common data collection. A dedicated federal department could also take the lead in the field of research and public information.

160. To shape a universal ECEC service, it is necessary to reach critical mass at administrative level, that is, to have a sufficient number of expert administrators to plan and implement an integrated, efficient system. In the process of integration, Sweden, for example, brought into the ministry of education officials from the social affairs ministry which originally had charge of early childhood planning. As the experience of Quebec has shown, a rapid increase in expenditure is not enough: building administrative capacity is a key issue. Detailed strategizing and planning are necessary to expand a large system efficiently and coherently. Without experienced managers with strong early childhood professional backgrounds, policy-making may lack that contact with the ground that is necessary for relevant policy formulation and successful implementation.

Funding and financing recommendations

1. Substantially increase public funding of services for young children

161. Background: Our discussion in Chapter 4 reviewed the financing of child care in Canada:

- Other than Quebec, there has been no significant expansion of the system in Canada over the past decade. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 years find a place in a regulated service (see Table 6, Background Report of Canada), compared to, for example, Belgium 63%; Denmark 78%; France 69%; Portugal 40%; UK 60%...
- Long waiting lists exist in community services in several jurisdictions, including in centres catering for children with special needs;
- A general stagnation in quality across the board has been reported (although several centres that the team visited achieved high quality);
- Low public expenditure rates per child in child care. Public child care expenditure for children 0-12 years averaged $386 per child, and $3,200 dollars per child care place (*Background Report of Canada* , 2001 figures), compared to $6120 per child in kindergarten and almost $15,000 per student at university (OECD 2002, EAG);
- A market-determined fee structure (except Manitoba and Quebec), resulting in high parental contributions to child care costs, ranging from 34% to 82% of costs. The average across the country excluding Quebec is just under 50% of costs compared to a maximum 15% parental contribution in Finland or approximately 25% across Europe;

- An inefficient subsidy system with widely varying and complex eligibility criteria, accessed by only (1997 figures) 22% of lone parents and around 5% of married mothers from low-income families;
- Generalised under-funding in the child care sector with respect to wages, learning materials and infrastructure both physical (premises, outdoor spaces) and non-physical (the infrastructure of planning, administration, training, monitoring, evaluation, data collection…).

162. Even in those provinces/territories that are keen to develop their ECEC systems, services are under-funded, and neither the quality nor the quantity of provision meets the aspirations of parents and professionals. Only a massive increase in investment, like that in Quebec, is likely to bring about desired change. An idea of how much extra funding will be needed can be had from the Quebec experience, and from the Cleveland/Krashinsky study of 1998. Obviously, costs are increased in Canada by the dispersion of settlements but, as outlined in Chapter 4, economic analyses of government expenditure on early childhood education and care services broadly concur that the investment pays off handsomely in terms of better health for children, readiness for school and stronger educational results. Again, as discussed in OECD (2001), only the regular funding that state investment brings is able to guarantee access and quality on a fairly equitable basis for all groups. A combined Federal/Provincial investment approach to this situation seems to be necessary to plan incremental increases of budget for young children over the next decades. In sum, the time seems ripe to consolidate the gains that have been made through recent federal/provincial/territorial agreements.

163. Observation: Various rationales for increased government spending in the early childhood field are discussed in a recent paper by Cleveland and Krashinsky (2003). In summary, the authors conclude:

> *In countries where there is relatively little government spending on ECEC (the U.S. and Canada are examples), mothers are working in ever growing numbers. Because the vast majority of mothers with young children are in the labour force, some kind of extra-family child care is usually required. Most ECEC experts argue persuasively that the quality of care being purchased in free markets is generally inadequate, and in many cases dangerous to children's development and future productivity. Because society cares about what happens to children, some significant public financing of higher quality ECEC is desirable.*

164. Most OECD countries have grasped this nettle, and within the last ten or twenty years, have greatly increase their investments in ECEC systemisation. Funding characteristics that we have noted in these countries are as follows:

- *A significant increase in ministry budgets* for all early childhood services, e.g. in the UK since 1998, budget has more than doubled. Significant budgetary increases have also been envisaged to meet the extra costs of *appropriate* inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream education.[30]
- *A pooling of resources and sharing of costs across ministries, social partners, local communities and users*, whenever common objectives are being attained for young children and their families, e.g. if wrap-around education and care for young children improves in turn social inclusion and labour market expansion, there is little reason why the capital and operational costs should not be shared across a range of ministries and other interest groups.[31]
- *A shifting of educational and social financing toward quality early childhood education and care*, where research indicates that the human and social capital returns on investment are greatest. Equality of opportunity in education is also enhanced.

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[30]. Apart from the human rights perspective (Article 23, Convention on the Rights of the Child), additional costs for special needs children in early education are more than recuperated through downstream savings on special education units, remedial teaching and social security.

[31]. In many countries, for example, builders are expected to include in their costs for housing estates, the construction of appropriately-designed crèches and schools. Local communities and industry can also be expected to contribute.

- *Cost-effective coordination of early childhood policies at central level and concentration of services at local level*, in particular for the 3-6 year olds. For example, rather than investments in rented and other premises, it has seemed more rational in many countries to invest significantly in school infrastructure, and to bring early education, full-day and out-of-school care together in one location. This presupposes that the school as a public building can be developed to receive early childhood services, conducted also by accredited non-governmental providers. Concentration of centre-based services helps to reduce costs considerably, improves quality and facilitates working parents.[32]

- *A sharing of tasks with the voluntary, community and private sector*, and the incorporation – whenever possible - of non-public providers into a publicly funded and professionally managed system. The contribution made by non-governmental organisations and local private providers to the state network is often significant, even essential.

- *The provision of operational subsidies to accredited providers that maintain high quality standards*. Operational subsidies are particularly efficient when voluntary early education bodies accept children from disadvantaged or special needs backgrounds, and keep fees within the range defined by the public authorities.

- *The enlistment of support from the corporate and business sectors*. In many countries, employers are among the main supporters of early childhood services. In the Netherlands, for example, employers are expected to provide a crèche or purchase child care places in accredited centres for the young children of their employees. In yet other countries, e.g. Korea and Mexico, firms employing a certain quota of young women are required by law to establish an on-site day care centre or subsidise child care expenses for their employees.

- *The emergence of a wide variety of funding mechanisms*. In the Nordic countries, local authorities have powers to raise taxes, which are devoted to supplementing the State allocation for health, social welfare and early education services. In Belgium and Italy, a significant part (about 1%) of social security and/or corporate tax is channelled toward child care. In Finland, the alcohol tax has been used for many years to subvention early childhood services, in particular, out-of-school care. In the USA, grants from the large corporations toward early childhood services are common, as tax concessions can be granted by the public authorities for large donations. State lottery proceeds are also used to fund early childhood services and to provide subventions to needy third-level students wishing to enter college.

2. Ensure the creation of a transparent and accountable funding system, and for parents, a fairer sharing of ECEC funding

165. Background: According to a 1998 survey of the sources of revenues received by child care centres across Canada (*Background Report of Canada, 2003*), revenues were derived: 49% from parent fees; 48% from government funding; and 3% from other sources, such as fund-raising, donations… These figures show the significant burden on Canadian parents relative to European parents who pay in general between 25% to 33% of child care costs.[33] In fact, if Quebec and Manitoba, which cap parental fees, were taken out of the above figures, the real costs to parents in the rest of Canada is well in excess of 50%. In contrast, many OECD countries provide universal free early education from the age of 3 years, although it should be noted, sometimes with child/staff ratios unfavourable to individualised attention to young children.

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[32]. Respect for the rhythms and interests of young children needs to be ensured in services attached to schools. In addition, the ministry, county or other body responsible for managing early childhood services at local level will need to consult and involve the community and voluntary sector in provision linked to the school.

[33]. In addition, in most European countries, free universal early education begins at the age of three years.

166. Observations: Many stakeholders in Canada drew the attention of the OECD team to financial issues. Among the challenges raised were:

- *Greater transparency in government accounting with regard to child care*. Expenditure on child care is generally aggregated for children from 0-12 years, which makes it difficult for independent analysts to calculate with accuracy the amounts governments are actually spending on services for young children up to age 6 years. Although the ECD Agreement and Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care explicitly require incrementality in investments from both parties, the team was informed on more than one occasion that there is little to prevent a Province from receiving Federal funding, while at the same cutting back on its own previous funding. Obviously, the team was not in a position to verify the situation one way or the other. However, we did observe that despite the agreements little net expansion in services has occurred in several provinces. In addition, weak quality continues to exist, and even in some instances, an erosion of community services had taken place. A more effective means of guaranteeing that expenditure adheres to the spirit of the Agreements may need to be legislated.[34]
- *A more equitable share for young children of available public subventions:* All the research concurs that the years prior to 5 are years of enormous learning potential. Yet, OECD figures (OECD, 2002) show:
  - that Canadian public expenditure per university student is more than double that for the child in the kindergarten service, the part of the early childhood system which receives most public support;
  - that in terms of GDP, Canada spends 0.2% of GDP on the pre-K and kindergarten service; 3.6% on obligatory schooling and non-tertiary, post secondary education; and 2.6% of GDP on tertiary level education.

167. There would also seem to be room for a readjustment of education budgets in favour of the foundation stage of lifelong learning, not to mention of health, social and other budgets where expenditure could be decreased by a universal child service, which ensured the health and well-being of young children, and when necessary, had strong community outreach. Apart from the equity argument in favour of readjustments, such measures could well have public support. At least, the argument was put to the team, in particular by women's groups, that if parents work and pay taxes, it would seem fair that a greater share of taxation should be devoted to the upbringing and education of young children, in particular, if this is seen to be part of national human capital development. Again, there is the anomalous situation that governments take fully in charge early education from the age of 5 years, as if early learning began only at that age.

168. In this context, the OECD team proposes for consideration a more equitable 40:40:20 sharing of children's services. In this division of funding, federal and provincial governments would provide at least 40% each, with a maximal overall contribution from parents of 20% to meet the cost of food and special programmes voted by the responsible community board, e.g. for music and art teachers, holiday programmes, etc.[35] As discussed in the next section, an agreed part of the government grant to centres would be earmarked for staff salaries, resources and the improvement of learning environment quality. With increased funding, improved licensing and quality standards can be imposed. In parallel, we encourage consideration of going toward the provision in the morning of a free focussed learning session for all young children from the age of four years, with parent contributions being required only for afternoon services.

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[34]. To some extent, the issue is addressed in the present *Multilateral Agreement*, but the onus is on "publics" in the provinces to monitor compliance with the agreement. Whether the publics can undertake this task effectively is open to reasonable doubt, as the effort requires both administrative and financial expertise that is costly to purchase.

[35]. A ceiling of 20% on aggregate parent fees allows for a graded fee structure, ranging from parents who cannot afford even meal expenses (for whom all fees would be waived) to high-income families from whom up to 50% of costs could be recuperated.

3. Given the present patterns of provision in Canada, devise an efficient means of funding a universal early childhood service for children from 1 to 6 years, delivered equitably by mixed providers, governed by public mandated agencies.

169. Background: In OECD countries, ECEC services fall roughly into three categories; those that originated in a social model – mainly Nordic countries; those that are mainly education based – for example France, Belgium, Italy and Spain; and those that rely on a mixed economy of provision – mainly English speaking countries. Most of Canada falls within the last category, and must logically draw for expansion on a mixed provision model that combines direct public educational provision (kindergarten) with community and private providers. At the same time, only significant public investment can ensure an equitable expansion. Expansion of the sector should also include out of school provision, ideally based on the school. To provide services of excellence to disadvantaged groups, we encourage that public funds should be channelled primarily toward *public* mandated agencies, which will be held accountable for registration and the quality levels of services, both public and private. A change in grant funding may also be envisaged, with a move away from personal subsidy mechanisms toward operational grant funding and an entitlement for children, as in the traditional education model (see our discussion of the issue in Chapter 4). Earmarked operational grant funding seems to be a surer means of ensuring more highly qualified personnel and enriched learning environments in the centres – both of which are strong indicators of quality and learning.

170. One means of providing a universal service – and one which seems to have the favour of Canadian parents (Johnson and Mathien, 1998) – would be to develop the present school based, kindergarten service. This offer could be expanded to full-day kindergarten(as is already the case in some places in Canada), with the addition of full-day pre-kindergarten whenever possible. Community services in co-operation with schools could participate in the provision of afternoon sessions.[36] The aim would be to provide a free morning education service for all children from the age of 4 years, followed by a subsidised recreational and early learning session in the afternoon. Afternoon sessions could also be used, at least to provide individual attention to young children who need special supports. A parallel increase in out-of-school provision for school age children could also be envisaged, based perhaps on the school but with different staff, objectives and regulations. This option is relatively straightforward, but with some caution about unfavourable child/staff ratios and the extension downwards of formal school methods to young children.

171. In parallel, funding could be increased to community, non-profit agencies to develop services for younger children - open to the children of non-working parents as well as working parents. However, the non-profit and for-profit providers of child care will not automatically expand services to meet increased demand, *without government intervention*. The experience of the UK, which has attempted to rely on the for-profit market to support women in the labour market, suggests that even the most active market does not respond to demand - especially in poor communities - without considerable incentives and subsidies. If sufficient incentives are provided, then, in principle, the private market can expand and eventually become competitive. The issue is further discussed in the Cleveland/Krashinski OECD paper (2003).

172. Observation: A real strength in Canadian ECEC is the existence of community networks, and the vitality of the non-profit sector. For this reason, the review team would suggest that in any mixed provision scenario, safeguards to protect the position of non-profits and small local providers should be built into any new configuration of services – a matter to be worked out together by the administrations and stakeholders concerned. A protective mechanism used in other countries is to provide public money only to public and non-profit services, and then to ensure financial transparency in these services through forming strong parent management boards. At the same time, the provision of services across a city or territory – not least

[36]. Projects in the Netherlands show that child care, early learning, kindergarten, adult education and parenting course can be effectively delivered through the school. In addition, combining education and care within the school makes for a more rational use of public infrastructure and greatly reduces capital expenditure.

in terms of mapping where services should be placed – should be overseen by a public agency. Valuable initiatives, both at provincial and community board levels, already exist in Canada in this matter, but in many instances, public responsibility for planning and supporting ECEC services needs to be developed. At the moment, we were informed, services are not always near the families that need them most.

Recommendations with regard to access

1. Continue efforts to expand access while promoting greater equity

173. Background: Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is low in Canada (see Table 9). Other than Quebec, there has been no significant expansion of the system over the past decade. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 years find a place in a regulated service (see Table 6, Background Report of Canada). If one were to subtract from these figures kindergarten enrolments at the age of 5 years, and the Quebec figures for the whole age range, the extent of the Canadian shortfall appears more clearly, not least when compared to the enrolment rates of 3-6 year olds in other OECD countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and the UK enrol at least 90% of their children by the age of 4 years in free, early education services). Further, it seems that the majority of young Canadian children are in unregulated care, as some 70% of Canadian women are in the labour force, four-fifths of them full time. The access situation improves in the kindergarten year, but in many instances, only for a half-day period, with regulated child care being frequently unavailable for the rest of the day. This weakness in provision has equity implications. Firstly, the development of many vulnerable young Canadian children remains unsupported, and secondly, choice and equality of opportunity for certain groups of women in Canada – especially at the lower end of the social scale – is substantially diminished. Even the moderate-income families find themselves at a disadvantage, as with insufficient services, costs to parents rise. The OECD team was informed on many occasions that affordability has become a serious issue for many moderate-income families in Canada.

174. Means of increasing access have been discussed in the previous section on financing, which, of course, is a key mechanism for expanding the system. The development of the present kindergarten/school system toward full-day, age-integrated provision is a long-term solution to be considered, but at the moment, a means also of stimulating expansion in the community sector must also be found. As mentioned, this is unlikely to happen in a satisfactory manner without considerable incentives and subsidies. For this reason, we encourage efforts to bring overall Canadian access and expenditure up to the OECD levels. Apart from Quebec, participation rates for children 3-6 years do not reach a quarter of those of the main European countries, and expenditure on early childhood programmes for this age group comes to just 0.2% of GDP, that is, about half of the OECD average. In terms of social justice and educational returns, it is reasonable to direct expansion first toward children in vulnerable situations and their families. Not to do so may reinforce socio-economic stratification, and create a vicious cycle for the children of low income families.

2. In so far as possible, include children with special educational needs in public early development/education service

175. Background: The OECD team witnessed in Canada some skilled examples of inclusiveness within mainstream provision, especially at kindergarten level. However, according to OECD (2004), although Canadian provinces have inclusion programmes in the school system, there is little evidence available on children receiving additional resources at pre-primary level. In the child care sector, data on children with special needs is even scarcer, which suggests that legal rights to access and state investments in inclusion may be weak at this level. Canadian research (Irwin, Lero and Brophy, 2000) confirms this hypothesis, noting that it can be extremely difficult for parents to obtain appropriate child care for children with disabilities, since staff lack training, buildings are not adapted, and funding is lacking. However, when sufficient human and material resources are made available, the public, universal service offers a

continuity of provision that many targeted services, however excellent, are unable to provide. In inclusive mainstream provision, teachers can also encourage empathy: children will, in principle, cross social divisions and learn to be more understanding and helpful to their peers with disabilities or disadvantage. In this sense, inclusiveness becomes a quality issue – it is likely to lead to better mainstream services.

3. Reinforce policies to support and include Aboriginal children

176. Background: In Canada, according to the child poverty figures, Aboriginal children and children of lone parents are particularly vulnerable groups, parents live more frequently on welfare or work irregular hours in low paid jobs. The issue is analysed in more depth in Chapter 4. In addition, supporting Aboriginal children is an important socio-moral issue for mainstream Canadian society. Will mainstream schools and children learn to understand and appreciate the children of the original inhabitants of the country? Despite some impressive work by dedicated First Nation and mainstream groups, the challenge seems to be growing. First Nation peoples still suffer from exclusion, poverty and demoralisation, and Aboriginal children are today amongst Canada's most vulnerable. As we witnessed in Saskatchewan, a new Aboriginal leadership is emerging to address issues of general poverty, school failure, youth delinquency, teenage pregnancy... Their efforts deserve every support from both Federal and Provincial governments.

177. Within the general terms of our recommendations in favour of Aboriginal children, we put forward tentatively a number of observations gleaned from our visit and the literature available:

- *That the co-operation with First Nation groups we witnessed in several provinces in Canada should be continued and reinforced*. In particular, we encourage such co-operation in early learning and education. Provincial/territorial governments with significant Aboriginal populations may wish – if they have not already done so - to consider the appointment of Aboriginal representatives to community child care and kindergarten boards. As in Hungary, it may be helpful to consider the required appointment of Aboriginal officials to the Ministry of Education, with responsibility to monitor minority education from early childhood through primary and secondary education, with a strong focus on transitions and actual outcomes (not just on participation rates).

- *We advocate also focussed educational research be undertaken with regard to Aboriginal children, with the fullest data possible on their educational outcomes (not just enrolments)*. As in some countries, *a special support system* could also be considered for schools enrolling significant numbers of Aboriginal children, so as to ensure their steady progress from kindergarten to university;

- More broadly, as the issue of Aboriginal poverty and lack of employment has a critical impact on young children, we suggest that *partnerships between the Provinces and the First Nation leaders in the cities should also be envisaged, so as to provide a more effective approach to opening education and employment opportunities to Aboriginal children and families living in urban areas.* Within such an initiative, networks of administrators, civil society experts and First Nation groups could be created at different levels to resolve concrete challenges.

- *We encourage governments to draw also on expertise and experience in other countries with significant First Nation populations*, most notably Finland, Norway and New Zealand. Perhaps the most useful international partner for Canada with regard to an inclusive early childhood approach is New Zealand, which faces similar issues with its indigenous Maori population. The ECEC curriculum for *all* children in New Zealand, *Te Whàriki*, (a woven mat), was jointly worked out with Maori groups, and draws heavily on Maori concepts of "belonging" and "contribution". As Carr and May (2000) comment, "*The framework is a celebration of the*

country's biculturalism". Separate language immersion programs still exist for some Maori children, but many Maori parents send their children to mainstream kindergartens in the knowledge that mainstream kindergartens follow a national curriculum in which Maori language and values are recognised and respected.

178. Observation: We were surprised that so little statistical evidence seemed available to chart child poverty levels and the circumstances of Aboriginal children more generally. This may be due, to some extent at least, by non-declaration of Aboriginal status. We suspected too that, in some instances, the programs in place may be reinforcing dependency and marginalisation. However, our conclusions in this matter must remain tentative, as our contact with the issue was short-lived, and both data and program evaluations were not always available.

Recommendations to improve quality

179. As financing – a major indicator of quality - has been treated above, we shall focus in this section on recommendations that impinge more directly on programme quality.

1. Develop a national quality framework for early childhood services across all sectors, and the infrastructure at provincial level to ensure effective implementation

180. Background: According to several commentators, the quality debate in Canada has been a restricted one. To simplify: in the education sector, the quality debate has tended to focus on rather narrow readiness-for-school goals. In the care sector, quality has been greatly undermined by the struggle to survive on inadequate subsidies. On the whole, the structural underpinnings of quality have been neglected, in particular, sufficient funding of the ECEC system and adequate profiling and training of staff (Canada Background Report, 2003).

181. Observation: A key contributor to quality in many countries is the formulation of *a national quality framework document.* A national quality framework may include: a statement of the values and goals that should guide early childhood centres; a summary of programme standards, that is, how programmes will be structured in terms of child/staff ratios, teacher qualifications… to facilitate development and learning; third, an outline of the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values that children at different ages can be expected to master in registered centres, across broad developmental areas; and fourth, pedagogical guidelines outlining the processes through which children achieve these goals, and how educators should support them. Such frameworks can help to guide and support professional staff in their practice, to promote an even level of quality across age groups and provinces, and to facilitate communication between staff, parents and children (see OECD, 2001, Starting Strong). It would focus on broad national aims, and on children's holistic development and well-being, rather than on detailed curricular objectives.

182. Many countries have shown also that it is possible to formulate common goals *for all provision*, whether care based or education based, centre based or home based (see, for example, the *Te Whàriki* curriculum in New Zealand, or the Swedish national curriculum). We have suggested also in previous sections that a core curriculum for Canada could reflect more clearly Aboriginal/Canadian heritage. It could also pay more attention to children's physical health and development (nutrition, exercise, taste for the outdoors, etc), and further stimulate children's autonomy and creativity. In the case of vulnerable children, special attention would be given to socio-emotional screening and development.

183. A broad pedagogical guideline should be further detailed and developed at provincial/territorial level, and finally, be translated by staff and parents into detailed professional learning and care programs at the level of each centre. At this level, curriculum is able to incorporate local concerns, languages and traditions, in line with the broad vision set out in the national or provincial framework. Professionals at

local level must be able to count on the support of provincial advisors to support their efforts to develop a curriculum, to access training that helps them to deliver if correctly, and to evaluate their own and the children's performance.

184. Another element of quality that may be important in the Canadian context is the issue of the size of services. Ideally, early childhood educational services should have sufficient critical mass, that is, to be of such a size that staff can work in teams, share their expertise and continue to learn from a variety of sources. Although not always possible in remote areas, early childhood centres of sufficient size are, according to the research, more effective as learning organisations, more economical and lend themselves better to monitoring and evaluation.[37]

2. Link accreditation of services to structural requirements and the achievement of quality targets

185. Background: According to various measurement of quality in both child care (Doherty *et al*., 2000) and kindergarten (Johnson and Mathien, 1998), quality in Canadian early education and care is generally mediocre, ranging from good (kindergartens) to low (child care services). In the past decade, because of lack of funding, child care centres have been obliged to focus on survival. Ensuring high quality across the board has been difficult for most provinces to underwrite. The development of quality programming and processes has often seemed a luxury, and an adequate infrastructure to inspect and support quality does not always exist. At centre level, staff are insufficiently remunerated and their motivation to strive for excellence in their field is often undermined. According to our interviews with staff, their wish to participate in training opportunities has often been thwarted by the fact that professional development is generally costly and takes place outside their hours of service.

186. Experience from other OECD countries suggests that improving quality in programme settings is a long-term project. Among the more important quality indicators to ensure are:

- *Adequate and regular funding of services*. In disadvantaged areas, governments need to strongly subsidise service operations in order to maintain access and quality, but as observed throughout this report, there are many good reasons for government to opt for a partially free, universal service, with enhanced resources when centres dealing with significant numbers of vulnerable children need to respond to greater nutrition, health and special learning needs;
- *Basic structural requirements are respected*, e.g. regular and sufficient financing especially of operating costs; support to centres from an active public management system; adequate child/staff ratios; enriched learning environment, both indoors and out; regular surveys and evaluations are conducted to monitor overall achievement…
- *High quality management*: We have already noted that the continuity of sound, evidence-based policy presupposes the presence of early childhood expertise and critical mass in government administrations. At ground level, expert managers are also needed to map services, to create networks (especially across dispersed settlements), to ensure monitoring and to organise the support services that centres and staff need. At centre-level, managers will ensure good working conditions and provide ongoing motivation and professional development for staff. Especially in disadvantaged areas, purpose-developed, parent/community involvement programs need to be co-constructed with parents and effectively implemented;

These requirements and system supports are well discussed in the *Background Report for Canada* (2003).

[37]. If because of population dispersion, critical mass is not possible at the level of individual centres, the negative effects of isolation can be offset through grouping small units on a neighbourhood or county basis, with a shared professional development programme and regular professional meetings.

3. Review ECEC professional profiles, improve recruitment levels and strengthen the initial and in-service training of staff

187. Background: OECD societies are today moving away from traditional notions of "child care" toward more developmental ambitions for young children. They expect early childhood centres to be the foundation stage of lifelong learning, to deal sensitively with immigrant and cultural issues, to respond appropriately to special needs children, and to provide individualised support to every child in moments of vulnerability or stress. ECEC professionals and teachers will be expected also to participate in the evaluation of achievement and learning. Increasingly, they will be trained to perceive the centre as a learning organisation requiring intensive collective participation in strategic planning, self-evaluation and professional development planning. In sum, a new ECEC professional profile is emerging.

188. Research shows strong links between training/staff support and the quality of ECEC services (Bowman et al, 2000), and the long-term wisdom of retaining qualified staff (CQCQ Study Team, 1995). Experienced staff have a major impact on children's well-being and learning achievement. In well-run centres, they will have an individual plan and portfolio for every child, and provide to parents regular feedback on their child's progress. Regular discussion, team-planning, auto-evaluation and in-service training are features of staff life in a quality centre.

189. As the concluding section of Chapter 3 illustrates, some of the provinces are addressing the issue (see, for example, Box 6 – Manitoba's early childhood labour market strategy), but adequate remuneration and status for child care staff remains a significant challenge in Canada. In the kindergarten sector, the recruitment and remuneration situation is healthier, but initial training is not appropriate in all cases. A significant portion of initial training should be specific to the early childhood field and to the understanding and delivery of the early childhood curriculum. The OECD team recommends particular attention to this issue, as quality in services depends to a great extent on the profiling, knowledge and motivation of staff.

4. Provide publicly-funded, high quality interventions in all disadvantaged areas

190. Research from other countries suggests that interventions toward disadvantaged groups need greater funding and are more effective when:

Early learning programmes take place within a general framework of anti-poverty and community development policies. (Kagan and Zigler, 1987, Morris et al., 2001, Sweeney, 2002). To break the poverty cycle and thus protect the socio-emotional development of young children from disadvantaged homes, wider issues such as employment and jobs training, social support, income transfers, housing policies, substance abuse and community resources need to be addressed.

Programmes are multi-functional and engage communities as well as children: that is, programmes are strong on family engagement and support as well as providing high quality learning experiences to the children. A national evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres in England has shown, for example, that integrated socio-educational services bring multiple benefits to children, families, and practitioners (Bertram et al., 2002; Pascal et al., 2002).

Programming for children is intensive: research indicates that the effectiveness of programmes for young children is enhanced by intensity (Leseman, 2002) and year-long duration (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2003). There is evidence to show, for example, that a structured, half-day, early learning programme should be incorporated into all full-day services.[38] The OECD has suggested above that consideration should be given to providing an intensive morning programme to all Canadian children from the age of 4 years.

[38]. The Dutch research conducted by Leseman indicates that five half-day, structured programmes per week produces more effective learning than shorter sessional programmes. Full-day programmes are even more effective especially in at-risk circumstances. The Chicago research underlines the efficacy of bridging programmes across holiday periods.

*Programmes are pedagogically sound and conducted by appropriately trained profes*sionals. A high quality programme in early childhood implies child–initiative, play and involvement. If a programme is over-focussed on formal skills, it is more likely to provide opportunities for children to fail, and to develop a higher dependency on adults, promoting in them negative perceptions of their own competencies (Stipek et al. 1995).

Depending on the degree of disadvantage, *enriched health and nutrition inputs may be necessary to ensure that young children can take full advantage of the early childhood service*.

5. Provide attractive indoor and outdoor learning environments

*191. Background***:** An important indicator of quality is the level of investment in and the appropriateness of early childhood buildings and learning environments. From the perspective of the review team, design standards for child care premises in Canada seemed poor, partly a reflection of many makeshift arrangements in low-rent buildings. In addition, materials and resources were often conventional and of doubtful learning quality. Plastic toys, tabletop games and worksheets are in general rather limited learning tools. Used in isolation, they seldom provide young children with a high–quality experience that generates linguistic, reasoning and communication challenges.

192. In its ten action points for teachers, the well-researched curriculum, *Experiential Education* (Flanders), consecrates no fewer than four points to the organisation of space:

- Rearrange the classroom in appealing corners or areas;
- Check regularly the content of the corners and replace unattractive materials by more appealing ones;
- Introduce new and unconventional materials and activities;
- Observe children, discover their interests and find activities that meet these orientations.

It is understood in *Experiential Education* and similar programme that teachers must also be highly active with the children in these areas. Adult interaction with the children enhances the interest and learning potential of the environment.

193. Where outdoor space is concerned, the quality of the yards attached to centres is often poor in Canada, a country with much land space available. Managers of centres where children spend long hours need to take account of basic developmental needs. Children need space to move, to physically express themselves and to take part in an active exploratory curriculum. Moreover, given current concerns about child health and obesity, it seems fitting to build opportunities for vigorous exercise into the curriculum.

194. Outdoor spaces need to be planned as more than recreational areas for young children. An outdoor environment intelligently constructed, e.g. a discovery garden – can be a very rich learning environment for young children. Plants, trees, flowers, water, dirt, sand, mud, animals, insects and birds present innumerable possibilities for manipulation or observation. Nature offers to children high levels of variety and interest, and invites longer and more complex play. Because of its interactive properties, it stimulates observation, discovery, dramatic pretend play, and imagination.

195. In some countries, architectural competitions have proved a useful catalyst for developing appropriate premises, most notably in Finland, Germany, Italy and Denmark. In certain parts in these countries, ecologically sensitive designs have been encouraged - where exploration of the environment and nature is easily possible for children and teachers. In Norway, there is also the belief that familiarity with the outdoors, and mastery of one's own climate and weather is important for children. Contact with the natural world contributes to the emotional health of children, to their sense of independence and autonomy,. Children benefit from the opportunity to imprint themselves in an experiential way on an environment, to endow it with significance, and to experience their own actions as transforming it.

196. In the outdoors, children learn about the cycle of life through observing living things, and if carefully guided, will learn respect for both life and nature. In addition, a natural or intelligently constructed outdoor environment places the focus on "experiencing" rather than "teaching". Young children learn through discovery and self-initiated activities, and their learning is multiplied through active involvement -- hands-on manipulation, sensory engagement, and self-initiated explorations. Natural elements provide for open-ended play and creative exploration with diverse materials.

197. In terms of readiness for school, children need also the concepts and vocabulary to formalise their experiences – and to symbolise it in speech, writing, movement and the other languages of children. In the forest and nature schools in the Nordic countries, well-trained professionals ensure the necessary support to children to enable then to re-express their experiences in both language and creative media. Children learn colours, numbers and vocabulary experientially in nature settings, and can experience basic principles of mechanics and mathematics in moving logs, building dams or collecting leaves.

6. Co-ordinate Canadian research and through funding, orient it further toward important policy issues

198. Background: Research, evaluation and monitoring are important components of quality. Canada has an impressive number of research programs and researchers of international status, and a wide range of effective analytic and monitoring tools, e.g. the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and its offshoot studies or the Early Development Instrument developed by McMaster University... Several of the provinces, for example PEI sponsor a broad range of evaluations and analyses (see *For Our Children: a strategy for healthy child development*, 2000). Yet, it seemed to the OECD review team that research initiatives and directions may be conceived separately within the provincial administrations and university departments. Given the potential importance of research in the coming years for Canadian ECEC, we propose for consideration:

- *Initiate a regular policy review and research cycle for early childhood education and care in the Provinces and across Canada*, bringing together governments, national research institutes and university early childhood research departments;

- *Further enhance public accountability mechanisms through rigorous and comparative data collection*, such as the annual reports and data collection required for participation in the *Multilateral Framework*. In this regard, according to several researchers, it would be helpful if early childhood data collection and analysis at provincial level were properly supported and supervised by Statistics Canada or other expert body;

- *Encourage independent evaluations of large programmes,* e.g. of Aboriginal Head Start, urban Aboriginal or community services within a region or large city, with the intention both of raising standards and forming staff;

- *Promote the publication of an annual review of policy and data on ECEC in each province and at national level,* such as the CRRU volume *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*, with the inclusion of a section summarising provincial or Canadian early childhood research for the particular year.

199. Observation: Annual or biennial policy reviews are a means of confronting current practice with up-to-date research and evaluation. They also give increased stability to the national research institutes, which in other countries, are funded to undertake the review and to propose new research. The cycles provide an opportunity for research institutes and universities to tender for important pieces of research and to organise their research more rationally. The mechanism also allows governments to take the lead, and mobilise the research community around issues of national or provincial concern.

Conclusion

200. At the outset of our review, the review team was asked to consider the following questions:

- What additional investments to support ECEC in Canada are needed in order to maintain policy momentum?
- How might common ECEC goals for Canada be pursued given the diversity and autonomy of provinces/ jurisdictions?
- What programs, delivery mechanisms, policies and practices could be highlighted as best practice, especially in the light of rapid demographic change?

201. This *Country Note for Canada* represents the views of the OECD team on these and related issues. The funding issue is addressed throughout the report as we consider that this is the critical issue in Canada where affordability of services, access and quality are concerned. We have also picked up on numerous examples of good practice in Canada, but note that the time seems ripe for a more dynamic and organised approach to early childhood services, especially from the side of the public authorities. We have also treated the challenges of diversity and autonomy that Canada's size and history impose, but tend to believe that a healthy balance is currently being achieved between Federal initiatives and provincial autonomy. Although structures are in some instances looser than in other federal countries that we have visited, yet a great deal of fruitful co-operation is taking place. Our *Upstream policy recommendations* at the beginning of this chapter underline our appreciation of the multilateral initiatives, while suggesting for the provinces a more active public responsibility for all early childhood services from 1-6 years. We have also put forward for consideration no fewer than six recommendations to improve the quality of services proposed to Canadian children and families.

202. We are conscious, however, that though we have been able to consider most of the questions raised, we have done so incompletely, as we were unable to visit either the most populous or the most remote provinces. In particular, the team regretted not having the opportunity to review the new policies in Quebec, which seem to have progressed far beyond a "child care" perspective. Our proposals in this report are presented, therefore, in a spirit of professional dialogue for the consideration to the Department of Social Development and the participating Provinces, but we also dare to hope that the broad framework of recommendations that we provide may be found useful by all provinces.

203. We especially commend the manner in which the review was organised by the Social Development secretariat and in particular, we wish to thank Barbara Moran, Ross Ezzeddin, Lindy Vanamburg and Robin Wright who accompanied the review process throughout. Our visits could not have been so informative and varied without the work of the ECEC Co-ordinators in the four Provinces we visited: Kathleen Flanagan-Rochon in Prince Edward Island; Susan Walker in British Columbia; Monica Lysack in Saskatchewan, and Jan Sanderson in Manitoba. The Provincial co-ordinators extended a warm welcome to the OECD team, and allowed us to engage in a rich and varied program of visits, during which we interviewed a wide range of officials, providers, stakeholders and researchers.

204. It should be noted, however, that the facts and opinions expressed in the Country Note are the sole responsibility of the review team. While we have received every help from Social Development and the Provincial authorities, and from many researchers and practitioners in Canada, they have no part in any shortcomings which this document may present.

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APPENDIX I – THE OECD REVIEW TEAM

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Paris, France

APPENDIX II – ITINERARY AND PROGRAM OF VISITS

Monday, September 22, 2003 – Ottawa

8:30 am	Welcome to Canada Briefing with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) officials
9:00 am	Meeting with Background Report writers and HRDC officials
10:15 am	Deputy Minister of HRDC official welcome of Review Team to Canada
10:30 am	Meeting with Federal ECEC Program and Policy Officials • Overview of direct and indirect federal roles in ECEC
12:30 pm	Meeting with Key National ECEC Stakeholders/Experts

Tuesday, September 23, 2003 – Charlottetown and area

8:00 am	Meeting with PEI team
8:45 am	Site visits: • Montessori children's centre • Kindergarten program • Family resource centre
12:00 pm	Lunch hosted by Department of Health and Social Services
2:15 pm	Issues in ECEC • Representatives from early childhood centres • Early Childhood Development Association • Holland College post-secondary ECEC program • MIKE program (measures quality in early childhood centres) • Francophone Affairs Secretariat • Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development, and • Departments of Health and Social Services and Education.
3:30 pm	Early Years Research • Participants include researchers from University of Prince Edward Island (CHART - Child Health Applied Research Team), Eastern School Board, Members of Understanding the Early Years Advisory Committee, and officials from Department of Health and Social Services
4:45 pm	Healthy Child Development Strategy - Meeting with Healthy Child Development Deputy Ministers and members of Children's Secretariat
7:00 pm	Dinner - hosted by Department of Health and Social Services

Wednesday, September 24, 2003 - Charlottetown

8:30 am	Atlantic Canada Issues and Priorities - Meeting of senior officials from Atlantic Provinces - Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador
10:45 am	Site visit to a child development centre
12:15 pm	Lunch - with senior officials from Health and Social Services and Education, hosted by Dept. of Education
1:45 pm	Meeting with stakeholders involved with PEI's community based, publicly funded Kindergarten
3:45 pm	De-brief with provincial officials

Thursday, September 25, 2003 – Victoria

10:00 am	Meeting with Government of British Columbia Interministry Child Care Policy Team
12:00 pm	Lunch with Directors of Child Care Programs, Child Care Policy and Supported Child Care
1:30 pm	Site visits: • Community program providing child care and other family supports • Child care centre
4:30 pm	Meeting with Dr. Alan Pence (University of Victoria)

Friday, September 26, 2003 – Vancouver

9:00 am	Site visits: • Community program providing child care, family resource services and recreation programs • Child development centre
2:00 pm	Meet with Provincial Child Care Council
4:00 pm	Meet with Dr. Clyde Hertzman and Dr. Paul Kershaw of Human Early Learning Partnership
7:30 pm	Dinner hosted by the Minister of State for Women's Equality, Community and Aboriginal and Women's Services

Sunday, September 28, 2003 – Regina

6:30 pm	Host officials provide briefing of itinerary
7:30 pm	Welcome and Overview of early learning and care in Saskatchewan – Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers of Learning and Community Resources and Employment

Monday, September 29, 2003 – Regina

9:00 am	On-Reserve site visits: • Aboriginal Headstart • On-Reserve Child Care • Elementary School
11:00 am	Stakeholder Meeting / Lunch hosted by Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council) (with Chiefs from the Treaty area, Health and Education representatives, the First Nations Early Childhood Working Group).
1:30 pm	Site Visits • Pre-kindergarten program • 24 hour child care centre
4:00 pm	Ministers' Advisory Board on Early Learning and Care
7:00 pm	Dinner with Minister Minister, Deputy Ministers, and Assistant Deputy Minister from Department of Community Resources and Employment and Assistant Deputy Minister from the Department of Learning

Tuesday, September 30, 2003 – Regina

8:30 am	Site Visits: • Teen student support program • Early learning centre • Child care centres
12:00 pm	Community Stakeholders Lunch Meeting sponsored by Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association
2:30 pm	Debrief with Saskatchewan Officials

Wednesday, October 1, 2003 – Winnipeg

8:30 am	Welcome and briefing by Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers of Family Services and Housing, Education, Citizenship and Youth and the OECD Co-ordinating Team
9:00 am	- Overview of Healthy Child Manitoba Framework - Overview of Manitoba Child Daycare program - Overview of Kindergarten
10:30 am	Meeting with stakeholders
1:00 pm	Rural site visits: • School-based child care centre, nursery school and kindergarten programs • Group child care home
6:30 pm	Dinner - hosted by Manitoba Family Services and Housing

Thursday, October 2, 2003 – Winnipeg

9:00 am — Urban site visits:
- Francophone child care centre
- Family child care home
- Child care / resource centre

2:30 pm — Site Visit:
- Inner City Child Care with Early Start partnership

4:00 pm — Reception with Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, Ministers & Deputy Ministers, and the OECD Co-ordinating Team

Friday, October 3, 2003 – Ottawa

10:00 am — Site visits:
- Inuit Head Start Program
- Inuit Family Resource Centre
- Pre-Post natal Program (Community Action Program for Children site)

12:00 pm — Lunch Meeting with Minister Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)) and John Godfrey, Member of Parliament and Chair, National Children's Agenda Caucus Committee and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Children and Youth At Risk

2:00 pm — Wrap Up Meeting with Review Team and Full Federal/Provincial/Territorial Steering Committee.

APPENDIX III – TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE *BACKGROUND REPORT OF CANADA*